

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

(For Intermediate Classes)

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3076



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P. SESHADRI.

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INTRODUCTION

The poetical selections included in this volume have been prepared under the authority and approval of the Board of High School and Intermediate Education, Rajputana including Ajmer-Merwara, Central India and Gwalior, for use in Intermediate classes. They are intended to be prescribed in parts for successive examinations lasting in all for five years. The quantity is, therefore, much larger than necessary for a single examination, the benefit of which will, it is hoped, be recognised by the students themselves.

Questions relating to the History of English literature are undoubtedly beyond the province of Intermediate students, but the poems in this volume have been arranged according to the dates of the writers, so that the young reader might develop a chronological sense which is a useful introduction to the study of any literature.

The pre-Elizabethan writers have been excluded as being too difficult for beginners. As Shakespeare receives separate treatment in the course, the selections actually begin from Milton. The eighteenth century is represented by Gray, Goldsmith and Cowper, besides others. Wordsworth and Coleridge are here representing the Romantic movement followed by Byron, Shelley and Keats. After Tennyson and Browning of the Victorian era, we come to our own times, a special feature of these selections being the inclusion of many pieces of contemporary and recent English poetry. The knowledge of no literature can be complete or even real, if it is confined to the classics of the past; its developments in the present draw attention to it as a living and growing organism.

An attempt has also been made to introduce the student to different varieties of poetic composition. The special appeal of stories to young minds is responsible for such narrative pieces as Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*, Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur* and

INTRODUCTION

Morris' *Atalanta's Race*. There is also an adequate representation of lyric poetry, while some of the earlier specimens represent a type of poetry which is no longer popular, but contains useful and inspiring thought. Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* may appear unfashionable to some, but the classics of literature are for all time and need not be thrown aboard without sufficient consideration.

The highest achievements of English poetry must necessarily be associated with English life and civilisation, but it is undoubtedly an advantage for the student to read poems with the background of his own country and people. Here are, therefore, several poems dealing with Oriental and Indian subjects, including pieces from such Indian writers as Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore. That the latter has actually won the Nobel Prize for literature by the publication of translations into English of his Bengali poetry must be no mean inspiration to the Indian student.

Some necessary notes have been added to the volume. It is hoped they will be found quite enough by the teacher as well as the student. They are not intended to be a substitute for the teacher's spoken word and his work of explanation in class, nor are they intended to prevent the student's necessary personal exertion for the acquirement of knowledge.

It is hoped that the appendix containing hints to teachers will be found useful, particularly in distant and outlying colleges which may not be provided with good collections of books and lead to some real and all-round improvement of teaching in our institutions.

In conclusion, the Editor wishes to convey his thanks to his son, Mr. P. V. Acharya, M.A., for his assistance in preparing the notes and seeing this volume through the press.

Dated Ajmer, the 22nd May, 1935.

P. SESHADRI.

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

I ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present

5

My true account, lest He, returning chide:

"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"

I fondly ask, but Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies; "God doth not need

Either man's work, or His own gifts. Who best

Bear His mild yoke they serve Him best. His state

10

Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,

And post o'er land and ocean without rest;

They also serve who only stand and wait."

—JOHN MILTON

II ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
(signifying death of the day)
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight. 5
And all the air a solemn stillness holds.
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight.
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower. 10
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wandering near her secret bower.
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade.
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap. 15
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid.
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn.
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn.
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return.
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield. 25
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke:
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure; 30
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile.
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power.
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave.
 Await alike th' inevitable hour:35
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
 If memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
 Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.10

Can storied urn or animated bust
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
 Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
 Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid45
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire:
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
 Or waked to extasy the living lyre:

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page
 Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;50
 Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
 The dark unsathom'd caves of ocean bear:
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,55
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest.
 Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.60

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Th' applause of listening senates to command.
The threats of pain and ruin to despise.
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land.
And read their history in a nation's eyes

Their lot forbad: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined:
Forbad to wade thro' slaughter to a throne.
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind:

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide.
To quech the blushes of ingenuous shame.
Or heap the shrine of luxury and pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife.
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray:
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey.
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd.
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

65

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80

85

On some fond breast the parting soul relies.
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires: 90
 Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries.
 Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
 Dost in these lines their artless tale relate,
 If chance, by lonely contemplation led. 95
 Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate.—

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
 'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
 Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
 To meet the sun upon the upland lawn; 100

' There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
 That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
 His listless length at noontide would he stretch.
 And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

' Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn. 105
 Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
 Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
 Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

' One morn I missed him on the custom'd hill,
 Along the heath and near his favourite tree; 110
 Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
 Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

' The next, with dirges due in sad array
 Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne;—
 Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay, 115
 Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth.
 A youth, to fortune and to fame unknown:
 Fair science frown'd not on his humble birth.
 And melancholy mark'd him for her own.

120

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere.
 Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
 He gave to misery (all he had), a tear.
 He gained from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

125

No farther seek his merits to disclose.
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode.
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose.)
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

—THOMAS GRAY

III THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
 Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain.
 Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
 And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd:
 Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
 Seats of my youth, when every sport could please:
 How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green.
 Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
 How often have I paused on every charm.
 The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
 The never-failing brook, the busy mill.
 The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill,
 The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade.

5

10

For talking age and whispering lovers made!
 How often have I bless'd the coming day 15
 When toil remitting lent its turn to play.
 And all the village train, from labour free.
 Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree:
 While many a pastime circled in the shade,
 The young contending as the old survey'd; 20
 And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground.
 And sleights of art and feats of strength went round.
 And still, as each repeated pleasure tired.
 Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
 The dancing pair that simply sought renown. 25
 By holding out to tire each other down;
 The swain mistrustless of his smutted face.
 While secret laughter titter'd round the place;
 The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love.
 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove. 30
 These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these.
 With sweet succession taught e'en toil to please;
 These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed.
 These were thy charms—but all these charms are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn. 35
 Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
 Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen.
 And desolation saddens all thy green:
 One only master grasps the whole domain.
 And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain: 40
 No more thy glassy brook reflects the day.
 But choked with sedges works its weedy way;
 Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
 The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest.
 Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies. 45
 And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.

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Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all.
 And the long grass o'erops the mouldering wall;
 And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand.
 Far, far away thy children leave the land.

50

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
 Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
 Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
 A breath can make them, as breath has made:
 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride.
 When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

55

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
 When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;
 For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
 Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
 His best companions, innocence and health.
 And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

60

But times are alter'd: trade's unfeeling train
 Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain:
 Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,
 Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose;
 And every want to luxury allied.
 And every pang that folly pays to pride.
 Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom.
 Those calm desires that ask'd but little room,
 Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene.
 Lived in each look, and brighten'd all the green:
 These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
 And rural mirth and manners are no more.

65

70

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour.
 Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
 Here, as I take my solitary rounds,

7

Amidst thy tangling walks and ruin'd grounds.
 And, many a year elapsed, return to view
 Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew, 80
 Remembrance wakes with all her busy train.
 Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care.
 In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
 I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown. 85
 Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down:
 To husband out life's taper at the close.
 And keep the flame from wasting by repose:
 I still had hopes, for pride attends us still.
 Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill. 90
 Around my fire an evening group to draw.
 And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
 And as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
 I still had hopes, my long vexations pass'd. 95
 Here to return—and die at home at last.

O bless'd retirement, friend to life's decline.
 Retreats from care, that never must be mine.
 How bless'd is he who crowns, in shades like these,
 A youth of labour with an age of ease: 100
 Who quits a world where strong temptations try.
 And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!
 For him no wretches, born to work and weep.
 Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
 No surly porter stands, in guilty state. 105
 To spurn imploring famine from the gate;
 But on he moves to meet his latter end,
 Angels around befriending virtue's friend;
 Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,

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While resignation gently slopes the way:
And, all his prospects brightening to the last.
His heaven commences ere the world be pass'd.

110

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose:
There, as I pass'd with careless steps and slow. 115
The mingling notes came soften'd from below:
The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung.
The sober herd that low'd to meet their young;
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool.
The playful children just let loose from school. 120
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind.
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind:
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade.
And fill'd each pause the nightingale had made.

125

But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale.
No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread.
But all the blooming flush of life is fled:
All but yon widow'd, solitary thing, 130
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread.
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn. 135
She only left of all the harmless train.
The sad historian of the pensive plain.

140

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled.
And still where many a garden flower grows wild.
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose.
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.

140

A man he was to all the country dear.
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race.
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wish'd to change his place:
 Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power. 145
 By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour:
 Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize.
 More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.
 His house was known to all the vagrant train.
 He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain: 150
 The long remember'd beggar was his guest.
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast:
 The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud.
 Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd:
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay. 155
 Sat by his fire, and talk'd the night away:
 Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done.
Shoulder'd his crutch, and show'd how fields were won.
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow.
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe; 160
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
 His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
 And e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side:
 But in his duty prompt, at every call, 165
 He watched and wept, he pray'd and felt for all:
 And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
 To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies.
 He tried each art, reproved each dull delay.
 Allured to brighter worlds and led the way. 170

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
 And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismay'd,

Vain transitory splendours! could not all
 Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall?
 Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
 An hour's importance to the poor man's heart:
 Thither no more the peasant shall repair
 To sweet oblivion of his daily care:
 No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale.
 No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail:
 No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear.
 Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear:
 The host himself no longer shall be found
 Careful to see the mantling bliss go round:
 Nor the coy maid, half willing to be press'd.
 Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

240

245

250

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
 These simple blessings of the lowly train:
 To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
 One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
 Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play.
 The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway:
 Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind.
 Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.
 But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
 With all the freaks of wanton wealth array'd,
 In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
 The toiling pleasure sickens into pain:
 And, e'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
 The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy?

255

260

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey
 The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay.
 'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand
 Between a splendid and a happy land.

265

Proud swells the tide with loads of frightened ore,
And shouting Folly hails them from her shore: 270
Hoards e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the worlds around,
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride 275
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds.
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
Has robb'd the neighbouring fields of half their
growth; 280

His seat, where solitary sports are seen.
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green.
Around the world each needful product flies.
For all the luxuries the world supplies;
While thus the land, adorn'd for pleasure all, 285
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female, unadorn'd and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrow'd charm that dress supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes; 290
But when those charms are pass'd, for charms are frail.
When time advances, and when lovers fail.
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless.
In all the glaring impotence of dress:
Thus fares the land, by luxury betray'd, 295
In nature's simplest charms at first array'd:
But verging to decline, its splendours rise.
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise:
While, scourged by famine, from the smiling land
The mournful peasant leads his humble band; 300

And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden and a grave.

Where then, ah! where shall poverty reside.
To scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
If to some common's fenceless limits stray'd. 305
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade.
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide.
And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city sped—What waits him there? 310
To see profusion that he must not share:
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind:
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know.
Extorted from his fellow-creatures' woe.
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade.
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomp display.
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way:
The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign.
Here, richly deck'd, admits the gorgeous train: 320
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square.
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
Sure these denote one universal joy!
And these thy serious thoughts?—Ah, turn thine eyes 325
Where the poor houseless shivering female lies:
She once, perhaps, in village plenty bless'd.
Has wept at tales of innocence distress'd:
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn.
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn. 330
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head.
And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the shower,

With heavy heart, deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town.
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

335

Do thine, Sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!

340

Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charm'd before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling; 350
Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance crown'd,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around:
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake:
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,
And savage men more murderous still than they:
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies,
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy vested green.
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only shelter'd thefts of harmless love.

355

360

Good Heaven! what sorrows gloom'd that parting day,
That call'd them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure pass'd.

365

Hung round the bowers, and fondly look'd their last.

And took a long farewell, and wish'd in vain

For seats like these beyond the western main;

And, shuddering still to face the distant deep.

Return'd and wept, and still return'd to weep. 370

The good old sire the first prepared to go,

To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;

But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,

He only wish'd for worlds beyond the grave.

His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears, 375

The fond companion of his helpless years.

Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,

And left a lover's for her father's arms.

With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,

And bless'd the cot where every pleasure rose; 380

And kiss'd her thoughtless babes with many a tear.

And clasp'd them close, in sorrow doubly dear;

Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief

In all the silent manliness of grief.

O luxury! thou cursed by heaven's decree, 385

How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!

How do thy potions, with insidious joy,

Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!

Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown,

Boast of a florid vigour not their own:

At every draught more large and large they grow,

A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;

Till sapp'd their strength, and every part unsound,

Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

E'en now the devastation is begun, 395

And half the business of destruction done;

E'en now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,

I see the rural virtues leave the land.

- Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
That idly waiting flaps with every gale, 400
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness are there;
And piety with wishes placed above, 405
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid.
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade,
Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame; 410
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe.
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so:
Thou guide, by which the nobler arts excel. 415
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well:
Farewell! and O! where'er thy voice be tried.
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side.
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow. 420
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time.
Redress the rigours of th' inclement clime;
Aid slighted Truth with thy persuasive train:
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain:
Teach him, that states of native strength possess'd. 425
Though very poor, may still be very bless'd;
That trade's proud empire hastens to swift decay.
As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky. 430

IV

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE

O that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say, 5
“Grieve not my child, chase all thy fears away!”
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blest be the art that can immortalize,
The art that baffles Time’s tyrannic claim
To quench it!) here shines on me still the same. 10
Faithful remembrancer of one so dear.
O, welcome guest, though unexpected here!
Who bidd’st me honour with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long.
I will obey, not willingly alone, 15
But gladly, as the precept were her own;
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief.
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,—
A momentary dream that thou art she. 20

My mother! when I learnt that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit, o’er thy sorrowing son.
Wretch even then life’s journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfelt a kiss; 25
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile! It answers—Yes.
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day.
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away.
And, turning from my nursery window, drew 30

All this, and, more endearing still than all.
 Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
 Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and breaks
 That humour interposed too often makes:
 All this still legible in memory's page.
 And still to be so to my latest age.
 Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
 Such honours to thee as my numbers may:
 Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere.
 Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.

65

70

Could time, his flight reversed, restore the hours.
 When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers. 75
 The violet, the pink, and jessamine.
 I pricked them into paper with a pin—
 (And thou wast happier than myself the while,
 Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile).
 Could those few pleasant days again appear. 80
 Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
 I would not trust my heart—the dear delight
 Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might—
 But no—what here we call our life is such.
 So little to be loved, and thou so much. 85
 That I should ill requite thee to constrain
 Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

85

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast.
 (The storms all weathered and the ocean crossed),
 Shoots into port at some well-havened isle, 90
 Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile.
 There sits quiescent on the floods that show
 Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
 While airs impregnated with incense play
 Around her, fanning light her streamers gay: 95

V
HOPE

As one who, long by wasting sickness worn,
Weary has watched the lingering night, and heard
Heartless the carol of the matin bird
Salute his lonely porch, now first at morn

Goes forth, leaving his melancholy bed; 5
He the green slope and level meadow views,
Delightful bathed with slow-ascending dews;
Or marks the clouds, that o'er the mountain's head

In varying forms fantastic wander white;
Or turns his ear to every random song, 10
Heard the green river's winding marge along.
The whilst each sense is steeped in still delight;
With such delight, o'er all my heart I feel,
Sweet Hope! thy fragrance pure and healing
incense steal.

—WILLIAM BOWLES

And what in quality or act is best
 Doth seldom on a right foundation rest.
 He labours good on good to fix, and owes
 To virtue every triumph that he knows:
 —Who, if he rise to station of command, 35
 Rises by open means; and there will stand
 On honourable terms, or else retire.
 And in himself possess his own desire:
 Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
 Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim: 40
 And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait
 For wealth, or honours, or for worldly state:
 Whom they must follow: on whose head must fall,
 Like showers of manna, if they come at all:
 Whose powers shed round him in the common strife. 45
 Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
 A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
 But who, if he be called upon to face
 Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
 Great issues, good or bad for human kind, 50
 Is happy as a Lover: and attired
 With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired:
 And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law
 In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw:
 Or if an unexpected call succeed. 55
 Come when it will, is equal to the need:
 —He who, though thus endued as with a sense
 And faculty for storm and turbulence.
 Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans
 To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes; 60
 Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
 Are at his heart: and such fidelity
 It is his daring passion to approve;
 More brave for this, that he hath much to love:—

VII

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS

Argument

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Coun'ry towards the South Pole: and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell: and in what manner the Aneyent Marinere came back to his own country (1798).

PART I

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
By thy long grey beard and glittering eye.
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man and constrained to hear his tale.

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide, 5
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din!

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he. 10
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child; 15
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

20

* The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells
how the ship sail-
ed southward with
a good wind and
fair weather, till it
reached the line.

The sun came up upon the left, 25
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day.
Till over the mast at noon—' 30
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding-
Guest heareth the
bridal music; but
the Mariner con-
tinueth his tale.

The bride had paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes 35
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

40

The ship driven
by a storm toward
the south pole.

' And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along

With sloping masts and dipping prow, 45
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe.
 And forward bends his head.
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast.
 And southward aye we fled. 50

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wondrous cold:
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

The land of ice,
 and of fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen. 55
 And through the drifts the snowy cliffs
 Did send a dismal sheen:
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
 The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around: 60
 It cracked and growled, and roared
 and howled
 Like noises in a swound!

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality. 65
 At length did cross an Albatross,
 Through the fog it came;
 As if it had been a Christian soul,
 We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
 And round and round it flew.
 The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
 The helmsman steered us through! 70

And lo! the Albatross prooveth a
bird of good omen
and followeth the
ship as it returned
northward through
fog and floating ice.

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play.
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud. 75
It perched for vespers nine:
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke
white
Glimmered the white moon-shine.

The ancient
Mariner inhospit-
ably killeth the
pious bird of good
omen.

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!— 80
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he.
Still hid in mist, and on the left 85
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo! 90

His shipmates
cry out against the
ancient Mariner,
for killing the
bird of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing.
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay. 95
That made the breeze to blow!

But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprise:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist. 100
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free:
We were the first that ever burst 105
Into the silent sea.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea! 110

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon.
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day, 115
We struck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink; 120
Water, water, every where
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
 That ever this should be!
 Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs 125
 Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
 The death-fires danced at night:
 The water, like a witch's oils,
 Burnt green, and blue and white. 130

A spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels.....

And some in dreams assured were
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so,
 Nine fathom deep he had followed us
 From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought, [135]

Was withered at the root;
 We could not speak, no more than if
 We had been choked with soot.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner, in sign whereof they hang the dead seabird round his neck.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
 Had I from old and young! 140
 Instead of the cross, the Albatross
 About my neck was hung.

PART III

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.

There passed a weary time. Each throat
 Was parched, and glazed each eye.
 A weary time! a weary time! 145
 How glazed each weary eye,
 When looking westward, I beheld
 A something in the sky.

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist:
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist. 150

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite.
It plunged and tacked and veered. 155

At its nearer approach, it seemeth
him to be a ship;
and at a dear ransom he freeth his
speech from the
bonds of thirst. 160

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm. I sucked the blood. 160

And cried, A sail! a sail!

A flash of joy; With throats unslaked, with black lips baked
With throats unslaked, with black lips baked
Agape they heard me call;
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in. 165

As they were drinking all.

And horror follows. For can it
be a ship that
comes onward with-
out wind or tide? 170

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly [175]

Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth him
but the skeleton of
a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face. 180

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs are
seen as bars on the
face of the setting
Sun.

The spectre-
woman and her
Death-mate, and
no other on board
the skeleton ship.
Like vessel, like
crew!

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
[185]

Did peer as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free, 190
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thickens man's blood with cold.

Death and Life-
in-Death have
diced for the ship's
crew and she (the
latter) winneth
the ancient Mariner.

No Twilight
within the courts
of the Sun.

The naked hulk alongside came, 195
And the twain were casting dice; *L. p. 1.*
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark; 200
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the rising of the Moon,
We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup.
My life-blood seemed to sip! 205
The stars were dim, and thick the night.
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white:

From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star 210
Within the nether tip.

One after another, One after one, by the star-dogged Moon.
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang, 215
And cursed me with his eye.

His shipmates drop down dead.
Four times fifty living men.
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump.
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner. 220
The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by.
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

PART IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a spirit is talking to him.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner! 225
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye.
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—

But the ancient
Mariner assureth
him of his bodily
life and proceedeth
to relate his horri-
ble penance.

Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
[230]

This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

235

He despiseth the
creatures of the
calm,

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And enviieth that
they should live
and so many lie
dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea, 240
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But for ever a prayer had gusht, 245
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and
the sky 250

Lay like a load on my weary-eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse
liveth for him in
the eye of the dead
men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor rook did they:
The look with which they looked on me 255
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
 A spirit from on high;
 But oh! more horrible than that
 Is the curse in a dead man's eye! 260
 Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse.
 And yet I could not die.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the Stars that still sojourn, yet still more onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

Their beauty and their happiness.

He blesseth them in his heart.

The moving Moon went up the sky.
 And nowhere did abide: 265
 Softly she was going up.
 And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main.
 Like April hoar-frost spread:
 But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
 The charmed water burnt alway 270
 A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
 I watched the water-snakes:
 They moved in tracks of shining white.
 And when they reared, the elfish light 275
 Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
 I watched their rich attire:
 Blue, glossy green, and velvet black.
 They coiled and swam; and every track 280

Was a flash of golden fire.
 O happy living things; no tongue
 Their beauty might declare:
 A spring of love gushed from my heart.
 And I blessed them unaware: 285

Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed then unaware.

The spell begins
to break.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

290

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, 295
That slid into my soul.

By grace of the
holy Mother, the
ancient Mariner is
refreshed with rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained. 300

My lips were wet, my throat was cold.
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs; 305
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

He heareth
sounds and seeth
strange sights and
commotions in the
sky and the ele-
ment.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear; 310
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

310

The upper air burst into life!
 And a hundred fire-flags sheen.
 To and fro they were hurried about! 315
 And to and fro, and in and out,
 The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
 And the sails did sigh like sedge;
 And the rain poured down from one black
 cloud: 320

The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
 The Moon was at its side:
 Like waters shot from some high crag,
 The lightning fell with never a jag. 325
 A river steep and wide.

The bodies of
 the ship's crew are
 inspired, and the
 ship moves on;

The loud wind never reached the ship.
 Yet now the ship moved on!
 Beneath the lightning and the Moon
 The dead men gave a groan. 330

Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
 It had been strange, even in a dream,
 To have seen those dead men rise.
 The helmsman steered, the ship moved on:
 They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose.
 [335]

Yet never a breeze up blew;
 The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
 Where they were wont to do;
 They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
 We were a ghastly crew. 340

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me, knee to knee:
 The body and I pulled at one rope
 But he said nought to me.

But not by the souls of the men, nor by dæmons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian Saint.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!' 345

Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
 'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
 Which to their corses came again,
 But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms, 350

And clustered round the mast;
 Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
 And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
 Then darted to the Sun; 355
 Slowly the sounds came back again.
 Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
 I heard the sky-lark sing;
 Sometimes all little birds that are, 360
 How they seemed to fill the sea and air
 With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
 Now like a lonely flute;
 And now it is an angel's song. 365
 That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon.
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June. 370
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on.
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship, 375
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop but still requireth Vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go. 380

The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir, 385
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

The Polar spirits
fellow demons, the
invisible inhabi-
tants of the ele-
ments, take part
in his wrong; and
two of them
~~relate~~, ~~one to the~~
other, that pen-
ance long and
heavy for the
ancient

Mariner hath
been accorded to
the Polar spirit
who returneth
southward.

'Is it he?' quoth one. 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low 400
The harmless Albatross.'

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow.
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.' 405

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner
hath been cast
into a trance; for
the angelic power
causeth the vessel
to drive north-
ward faster than
human life could
endure.

'But tell me, tell me! speak again, 410
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?

SECOND VOICE

'Still as a slave before his lord.
The ocean hath no blast; 415
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go:
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously 420
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

• But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?"

SECOND VOICE

"The air is cut away before.
And closes from behind.

425

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated."

The super-natural motion is retarded;
the Mariner awakes,
and his penance begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high,
The dead men stood together.

430

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

435

The pang, the curse, with which they died.
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs.
Nor turn them up to pray.

440

The curse is finally expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green.
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

445

Like one, that on a lonesome road
 Doth walk in fear and dread.
 And having once turned round walks on,
 And turns no more his head;
 Because he knows, a frightful fiend 450
 Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
 Nor sound nor motion made:
 Its path was not upon the sea.
 In ripple or in shade. 455

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
 Like a meadow-gale of spring—
 It mingled strangely with my fears,
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship. 460
 Yet she sailed softly too:
 Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
 On me alone it blew.

And the ancient
 Mariner beheldeth
 his native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
 The light-house top I see?
 Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
 Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar.
 And I with sobs did pray—
 O let me be awake, my God!
 Or let me sleep alway. 470

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
 So smoothly it was strewn!

And on the bay the moonlight lay.
And the shadow of the Moon.

475

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,

And the bay was white with silent light [480]

Till rising from the same.
Full many shapes, that shadows were.
In crimson colours came.

And appear in their own forms of light.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

485

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat.
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man.
On every corse there stood.

490

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land.
Each one a lovely light;

495

This seraph-band, each waved his hand.
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars, 500
 I heard the Pilot's cheer;
 My head was turned perforce away;
 And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
 I heard them coming fast: 505
 Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
 The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
 It is the Hermit good!
 He singeth loud hid godly hymns 510
 That he makes in the wood.
 He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away
 The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

The Hermit of This Hermit good lives in that wood
 the Wood. Which slopes down to the sea. 515
 How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
 He loves to talk with mariners
 That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
 He hath a cushion plump: 520
 It is the moss that wholly hides
 The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
 'Why, this is strange. I trow!
 Where are those lights so many and fair,
 [525
 That signal made but now?'

- Approacheth the ship with wonder.
- ‘Strange, by my faith!’ the Hermit said—
 ‘And they answered not our cheer!
 The planks look warped! and see those sails.
- How thin they are and sere! 530
 I never saw aught like to them.
 Unless perchance it were
- Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
 My forest-brook along;
 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow, 535
 And the owlet whoops to the wolf below.
 That eats the she-wolf’s young.’
- ‘Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
 (The Pilot made reply)
 I am a-feared’—‘Push on, push on!’ 540
 Said the Hermit cheerily.
- The boat came closer to the ship,
 But I nor spake nor stirred;
 The boat came close beneath the ship,
 And straight a sound was heard. 545
- The ship suddenly sinketh.
- Under the water it rumbled on.
 Still louder and more dread:
 It reached the ship, it split the bay;
 The ship went down like lead.
- The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot’s boat.
- Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound, [550]
 Which sky and ocean smote,
 Like one that hath been seven days drowned
 My body lay afloat;
 But swift as dreams, myself I found
 Within the Pilot’s boat. 555

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship.
 The boat spun round and round;
 And all was still, save that the hill
 Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked 560
 And fell down in a fit:
 The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
 And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy, 565
 Who now doth crazy go.
 Laughed loud and long, and all the while
 His eyes went to and fro.
 'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see.
 The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree, 570
 I stood on the firm land!
 The Hermit stepped forth from the boat.
 And scarcely he could stand.

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!
 The Hermit crossed his brow. 575
 'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
 What manner of man art thou?'

The ancient
 Mariner earnestly
 entreateth the
 Hermit to shrieve
 him and the ven-
 geance of life falls
 on him.

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
 With a woful agony,
 Which forced me to begin my tale; 580
 And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land;

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

585

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

590

What loud uproar bursis from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell
Which biddeth me to prayer!

595

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea;
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seeméd there to be.

600

O sweeter than the marriage-feast.
'Tis sweeter far to me.
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

605

And to teach, by his own example, love and reverence. Farewell, farewell! but this I tell To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best All things both great and small; For the dear God who loveth us. He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright, Whose beard with age is hoar. Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest 620 Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned, And is of sense forlorn: A sadder and a wiser man, He rose the morrow morn. 625

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

VIII

THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES

I have had playmates, I have had companions.
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing.
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies; 5
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a Love once, fairest among women:
 Closed are her doors on me. I must not see her—
 All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man: 10
 Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly:
 Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood.
 Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse.
 Seeking to find the old familiar faces. 15

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother.
 Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
 So might we talk of the old familiar faces.

How some they have died, and some they have left me.
 And some are taken from me: all are departed; 20
 All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

—CHARLES LAMB

IX NIGHT

Mysterious Night! when our first parent knew
 Thee from report divine, and heard thy name.

Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
 This glorious canopy of light and blue?

Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew, 5
 Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
 Hesperus with the host of heaven came.
 And lo! creation widened in man's view.

Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
 Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find, 10
 Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed.
 That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
 Why do we then shun Death with anxious strife?
 If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?

—JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE

X

THE CROWDED HOUR

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
 To all the sensual world proclaim,
 One crowded hour of glorious life
 Is worth an age without a name.

—SIR WALTER SCOTT

XI

THE OCEAN

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
 There is society, where none intrudes.
 By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
 I love not Man the less, but Nature more, 5
 From these our interviews, in which I steal
 From all I may be, or have been before,
 To mingle with the Universe, and feel
 What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll! 10
 Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain:
 Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
 Stops with the shore:—upon the watery plain
 The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
 A shadow of man's ravage, save his own, 15
 When, for a moment, like a drop of rain.
 He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan.
 Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths.—thy fields 20
 Are not a spoil for him.—thou dost arise
 And shake him from thee: the vile strength he yields
 For earth's destruction thou dost all despise.
 Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies.
 And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray 25
 And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
 His petty hope in some near port or bay.
 And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
 Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake.
 And monarchs tremble in their capitals. 30
 The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
 Their clay creator the vain title take
 Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war:
 These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake.
 They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar 35
 Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
 Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
 Thy waters wash'd them power while they were free.
 And many a tyrant since: their shores obey 40

The stranger, slave, or savage: their decay
 Has dried up realms to deserts:—not so thou,—
 Unchangeable save to thy wild waves play—
 Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow—
 Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

45

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
 Glasses itself in tempests: in all time,
 Calm or convulsed—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
 Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
 Dark-heaving,—boundless, endless, and sublime— 50
 The image of Eternity—the throne
 Of the Invisible: even from out thy slime
 The monsters of the deep are made: each zone
 Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy 55
 Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
 Borne, like thy bubbles, onward; from a boy
 I wanton'd with thy breakers—they to me
 Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
 Made them a terror—'twas a pleasing fear. 60
 For I was as it were a child of thee.
 And trusted to thy billows far and near,
 And laid my hands upon thy name—as I do here.

—LORD BYRON

XII
THE CLOUD

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,

From the seas and the streams;

I bear light shade for the leaves when laid

In their noon-day dreams.

From my wings are shaken the dews that awaken

The sweet buds every one.

When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,

As she dances about the sun.

I wield the flail of the lashing hail.

And whiten the green plains under,

And then again I dissolve it in rain,

And laugh as I pass in thunder.

5

10

15

20

25

30

I sift the snow on the mountains below.

And their great pines groan aghast;

And all the night 'tis my pillow white,

While I sleep in the arms of the blast.

Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers.

Lightning my pilot sits.

In a cavern under is fettered the thunder.

It struggles and howls at fits;

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,

This pilot is guiding me.

Lured by the love of the genii that move

In the depths of the purple sea;

Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills.

Over the lakes and the plains.

Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream.

The Spirit he loves remains;

And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,

Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack.

When the morning star shines dead.

As on the jag of a mountain crag.

35

Which an earthquake rocks and swings.

An eagle alit one moment may sit

In the light of its golden wings.

And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love.

40

And the crimson pall of eve may fall

From the depth of heaven above.

With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,

As still as a brooding dove.

That orbed maiden with white fire laden,

45

Whom mortals call the moon.

Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,

By the midnight breezes strewn;

And wherever the beat of her unseen feet.

Which only the angels hear,

50

May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,

The stars peep behind her and peer;

And I laugh to see them whirl and flee.

Like a swarm of golden bees.

When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,

55

Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,

Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,

Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,

And the moon's with a girdle of pearl:

60

The volcanos are dim, and the stars reel and swim,

When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.

From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea. 65
 Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof.
The mountains its columns be.
 The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow.
 When the powers of the air are chained to my chair
Is the million-coloured bow; 70
 The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove.
 While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water.
 And the nursling of the sky:
 I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores; 75
 I change but I cannot die.
 For after the rain when with never a stain.
 The pavilion of heaven is bare.
 And the winds and sunbeams, with their convex gleams.
 Build up the blue dome of air. 80
 I silently laugh at my own cenotaph.
 And out of the caverns of rain.
 Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb.
 I arise and unbuild it again.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

XIII AUTUMN

1

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.
 Close-bosom friend of the maturing sun:
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run:

To bend with apples the mossed cottage trees, 5
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees
 Until they think warm days will never cease, 10
 For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.

2

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store:
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind: 15
 Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers:
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook; 20
 Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

3

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—
 While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day, 25
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river sallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies:
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn: 30
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

XIV

THE VALE OF CASHMERE

Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere.

With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave.

Its temples, and grottos, and fountains as clear

As the love-lighted eyes that hang over their wave?

Oh! to see it ~~as~~ sunset.—when warm o'er the Lake 5

Its splendour at parting a summer eve throws.

Like a bride, full of blushes, when ling'ring to take

A last look of her mirror at night ere she goes!—

When the shrines through the foliage are gleaming half shown,

And each hallows the hour by some rites of its own. 10

Here the music of prayer from a minaret swells.

Here the Magian his urn, full of perfume, is swinging.

And here, at the altar, a zone of sweet bells

Round the waist of some fair Indian dancer is ringing.

Or to see it by moonlight,—when mellowly shines 15

The light o'er its palaces, gardens, and shrines:

When the water-falls gleam, like a quick fall of stars.

And the nightingale's hymn from the Isle of Chenars

Is broken by laughs and light echoes of feet

From the cool, shining walks where the young people meet.—

[20]

Or at morn, when the magic of daylight awakes

A new wonder each minute, as slowly it breaks.

Hills, cupolas, fountains, called forth every one

Out of darkness, as if but just born of the Sun.

When the Spirit of Fragrance is up with the day,

25

From his Harem of night-flowers stealing away;

And the wind, full of wantonness, woos like a lover

The young aspen-trees, till they tremble all over.

When the East is as warm as the light of first hopes,

And Day, with his banner of radiance unfurled.

30

Shines in through the mountainous portal that opes,
Sublime, from that Valley of bliss to the world!

THOMAS MOORE

XV

MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea:
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their Lord.

5

King Arthur; then, because his wound was deep.
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field.

10

A broken chancel with a broken cross.
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:

'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds.'

15

Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm

20

25

That without help I cannot last till morn,
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur.
 Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
 In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake. 30
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
 Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king:
 And wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known: 35
 But now delay not: take Excalibur.
 And fling him far into the middle mere:
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
 'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus. 40
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
 A little thing may harm a wounded man.
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full.
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men.
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
 By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock. 50
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt: 55
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks.
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
 That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,

This way and that dividing the swift mind.
 In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
 So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

60

65

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
 'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
 What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'
 And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:

'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds.
 And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

70

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
 'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
 Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
 Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand—
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
 This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
 I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

75

80

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere.
 Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought:
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
 How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
 His palms together, and he cried aloud:

85

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
 Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
 Should thus be lost for ever from the earth.
 Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
 What good should follow this, if this were done?
 What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey.'

90

- Seeing obedience is the bond of rule. 95
 Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
 An act unprofitable, against himself?
 The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
 What record, or what relic of my lord
 Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
 And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept. 100
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings.
 Someone might show it at a joust of arms.
 Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
 Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps 105
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime
 To all the people, winning reverence.
 But now much honour and much fame were lost,
 So spake he, clouded with his own conceit. 110
 And hid Excalibur the second time.
 And so strode back slow to the wounded King.
 Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
 'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'
 And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere: 115
 'I heard the water lapping on the crag.
 And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'
 To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
 'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue.
 Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! 120
 Authority forgets a dying king.
 Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
 That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art.
 For thou, the latest-left of all my knights.
 In whom should meet the offices of all, 125
 Thou wouldest betray me for the precious hilt;
 Either from lust of gold, or like a girl

Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
 Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice.
 And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
 But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur.
 I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran.
 And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
 Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword.
 And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
 Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
 And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch
 Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
 Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
 By night, with noises of the northern sea.
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
 And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
 Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?' 150

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
 'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
 Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
 Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
 ' My end draws nigh: 'tis time that I were gone.
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
 And bear me to the margin: yet I fear
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
 Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,

And would have spoken, but he found not words.
 Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands.
 And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard.
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear, ' Quick, quick!
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
 Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
 And on a sudden, lo! the level lake.
 And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern.
 Beneath them: and descending they were ware

165

170

175

180

185

190

195

That all the decks were dense with stately forms
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
 Three queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars, 200
 And, as it were one voice, an agony
 Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
 All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
 Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'
 And to the barge they came. There those three Queens 205
 Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
 But she, that rose the tallest of them all
 And fairest, laid his head upon her lap.
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
 And called him by his name, complaining loud, 210
 And dropping bitter tears against his brow
 Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
 And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
 Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops 215
 Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
 That made his forehead like a rising sun
 High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust;
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose.
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips. 220
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings. 225

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
 'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
 For now I see the true old times are dead,

When every morning brought a noble chance.
 And every chance brought out a noble knight.
 Such times have been not since the light that led
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
 But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
 Which was *an image of the mighty world:*
 And I, the last, go forth companionless.
 And the days darken round me, and the years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

230

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:
 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
 And God fulfils Himself in many ways.
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within Himself make pure! but thou,
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain.
 If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
 For so the whole round earth is everyway
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
 To the island-valley of Avilion;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow.
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
 And bowery hollow crown'd with summer sea.

240

245

250

255

260

Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail 265
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death.
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
 Resolving many memories, till the hull 270
 Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
 And on the mere wailing died away.

—LORD TENNYSON

XVI

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
 A mile or so away
 On a little mount, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day;
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how, 5
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused " My plans
 " That soar, to earth may fall.
 " Let once my army-leader Lannes
 " Waver at yonder wall,"—
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound 10
 Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
 Until he reached the mound. 15

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy.
 And held himself erect
 By just his horse's mane. a boy:
 You hardly could suspect—
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed.
 Scarce any blood came through)
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

20:

IV

“ Well,” cried he. “ Emperor, by God's grace
 “ We've got you Ratisbon!
 “ The Marshal's in the market-place.
 “ And you'll be there anon
 “ To see your flag-bird flap his vans
 “ Where I, to heart's desire.
 “ Perched him!” The Chief's eye flashed; his plans
 Soared up again like fire.

25
30
30

V

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently
 Softened itself, as sheathes
 A film the mother eagle's eye
 When her bruised eaglet breathes:
 “ You're wounded!” “ Nay,” his soldier's pride
 Touched to the quick, he said:
 “ I'm killed, Sire!” And, his Chief beside.
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

35
40:
40

—ROBERT BROWNING

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

XVII
SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AN EPISODE

And the first grey of morning fill'd the east.
 And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
 But all the Tartar camp along the stream
 Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep: 5
 Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
 He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed:
 But when the grey dawn stole into his tent.
 He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword.
 And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent. 10
 And went abroad into the cold wet fog.
 Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
 Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
 Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere: 15
 Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand.
 And to a hillock came, a little back
 From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,
 Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land. 20
 The men of former times had crown'd the top
 With a clay fort: but that was fall'n, and now
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
 A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood 25
 Upon the thick-piled carpets in the tent.
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
 Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep:

And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—

30

“ Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.

Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?”

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:—

“ Thou know’st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.

35

The sun is not yet risen, and the foe

Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie

Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.

For so did Kind Afrasiab bid me seek

Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,

40

In Samarcand, before the army march’d;

And I will tell ‘thee what my heart desires.

Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first

I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,

I have still serv’d Afrasiab well, and shown,

At my boy’s years, the courage of a man.

45

This too thou know’st, that, while I still bear on

The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,

And beat the Persians back on every field,

I seek one man, one man, and one alone—

Rustum, my father; who, I hoped, should greet,

50

Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field

His not unworthy, not inglorious son.

So I long hoped, but him I never find.

Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.

Let the two armies rest to-day: but I

55

Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords

To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,

Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—

Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.

Dim is the rumour of a common fight.

60

Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:

But of a single combat Fame speaks clear.”

He spoke, and Peran-Wisa took the hand

Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—

65

“O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,

70

To find a father thou hast never seen?

That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring: in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiah's towns.

But, if indeed this one desire rules all,
To seek out Rustom—seek him not through fight:

75

Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!

But far hence seek him, for he is not here,
For now it is not as when I was young.

80

When Rustom was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,

In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhor'd approaches of old age:

85

Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.

There go!—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.

Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace

90

To seek thy father, not seek single fights

In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening? and who govern Rustom's son?

Go: I will grant thee what thy heart desires.”

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left

95

His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay.

And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat

He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet.

And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword:
 And on his head he placed his sheep-skin cap.
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul:
 And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.

100

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
 Into the open plain; so Haman bade:
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.

105

From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd:
 [110]

As when, some grey November morn, the files.
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes.
 Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries.
 Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
 For the warm Persian sea-board; so they stream'd.
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard.
 First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears:
 Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
 Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south.
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
 Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd:
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
 And close-set skull-caps: and those wilder hordes

115

120

125

130

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
 Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.

135

These all filed out from camp into the plain.
 And on the other side the Persians form'd:
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind.

The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot.
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnished steel.

140

But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front.
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw

145

That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back.
 He took his spear, and to the front he came.
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand

Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—

150

“Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.”

As, in the country, on a morn in June.

155

When the dew glistens on the pearled ears.
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

160

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,

Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus.
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk and snow:
 Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,

Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves 165
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up 170
 To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came.
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
 Second, and was the uncle of the King;
 These came and counsell'd: and then Gudurz said:—

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up. 175
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear 180
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and said:—

“ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said. 185
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran, 190
 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
 Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the midst
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found 195
 Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still
 The table stood beside him, charged with food;
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And dark green melons: and there Rustum sate
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist.
 And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
 Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand:
 And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird.
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—

200

“Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink.”
 But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—

205

“Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,
 But not to-day: to-day has other needs.”

210

The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.

215

O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old.
 Or else too weak: and all eyes turn to thee.
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose.”

220

He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—

“Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I
 Am older: if the young are weak, the King
 Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai-Khosroo,
 Himself is young, and honours younger men.”

225

And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?

For would that I myself had such a son.

230

And not that one slight helpless girl I have,
 A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal.

My father, whom the robber Afghans vex.
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds.
 And he has none to guard his weak old age. 235
 There would I go, and hang my armour up.
 And with my great name fence that weak old man.
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got.
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame.
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings. 240
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."

He spoke, and smiled: and Gudurz made reply:—

" What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
 The most of all, and thou whom most he seeks. 245
 Hidest thy face? Take heed, that men should say,
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men."

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:—

" O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words? 250
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
 But who for men of nought would do great deeds? 255
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
 In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frown'd: and Gudurz turn'd and ran 260
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose 265
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,

Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And from the fluted spine atop a plume
 Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
 So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse, 270
 Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
 Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find 275
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
 And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know: 280
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd: but the Tartars knew not who he was
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes 285
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf.
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands— 290
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.
 And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
 And Sohrab arm'd Haman's tent, and came,
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn, 295
 And on each side are squares of standing corn,
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast 300
 His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw

Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,

Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn.

305

When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth

310

All the most valiant chiefs: long he perused
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd:

Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight.
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws

315

Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf.

By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.

And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul

As he beheld him coming; and he stood.

320

And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—

"O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron."

325

And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:

Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.

O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?

Be govern'd: *quit the Tartar host, and come*

330

To Iran, and be as my son to me,

And fight beneath my banner till I die.

There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."

So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice.

The mighty voice of Rustum: and he saw
 His giant figure planted on the sand,
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Has builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers: and he saw that head,
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs: hope fill'd his soul; 310
 And he ran forwards and embraced his knees,
 And clasp'd his hand within his own and said:—

“ Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
 Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?”

But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth. 315
 And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul:

“ Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,
 And hide it not, but say —*Rustum is here*—
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,
 And praise my name, and proffer courteous gifts,
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.

And on a feast day, in Afrasiab's hall, 335
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—

‘ I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
 To cope with me in single fight: but they
 Shrank: only Rustum dared: then he and I
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away;
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
 Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me.”

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:
 “ Hie! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
 Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
 By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt, or yield.
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?”

Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this day, and were revealed
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this:

370

Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield;
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods.
Oxus in summer wash them all away."

375

He spoke: and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—
“Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so.
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.

380

Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.

385

Begin: thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.

390

For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea.

395

Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know:
Only the event will teach us in its hour.”

He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come,

400

And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
 Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab threw 405
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield: sharp rang,
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear,
 And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
 Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
 Still rough: like those which men in treeless plains 410
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
 Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs; so huge 415
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
 One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
 Lithe as glancing snake, and the club came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell 420
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand:
 And now might Sohrab have unsheathe'd his sword,
 And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand:
 But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword, 425
 But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—
 “Thou strik'st too hard: that club of thine will float
 Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
 But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth am I:
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul. 430
 Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum: be it so.
 Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men; 435
 But never was my heart thus touch'd before.

Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!

Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears.
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand.

440

And pledge each other in red wine, like friends
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.

There are enough foes in the Persian host
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight: fight them, when they confront thy spear.
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"

445

He ceased: But while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage: his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,
The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heaved: his lips foam'd; and twice his voice
Was choked with rage: at last these words broke way:—

450

" Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now

460

With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.

Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!

465

Remember all thy valour; try thy feints
And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."

He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts.

470

- And he too drew his sword: at once they rush'd
 Together, as two eagles on one prey
 Come rushing down together from the clouds,
 One from the east, one from the west: their shields
 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din 475
 Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
 And you would say that sun and stars took part 480
 In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
 Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
 Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair. 485
 In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
 For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
 Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
 And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
 But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes 490
 And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
 Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-spiked spear
 Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
 And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm, 495
 Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
 Never till now defiled, sunk to the dust;
 And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom
 Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air, 500
 And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse.
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
 Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day

- Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side. 505
 And comes at night to die upon the sand:—
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
 And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rushed on.
 And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd 510
 His head: but this time all the blade, like glass.
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm.
 And in his hand the hilt remained alone.
 Then Rustum raised his head: his dreadful eyes
 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear 515
 And shouted, Rustum! Sohrab heard that shout.
 And shrank amazed: back he recoil'd one step.
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing Form.
 And he stood bewilder'd: and he dropped
 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side. 520
 He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.
 And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell.
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
 The cloud: and the two armies saw the pair:
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet. 525
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.
 Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:—
 "Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse.
 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent. 530
 Or else that great Rustum would come down
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
 His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
 And then that all the Tartar host would praise
 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame. 535
 To glad thy father in his weak old age.
 Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
 Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,

That to thy friends, and to thy father old."

And with a fearless mien Sohrab replied:—

540

"Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain,
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.

For were I match'd with ten such as thou,

And I were he who till to-day I was,

545

They should be lying here. I standing there.

But that beloved name unnerved my arm—

That name, and something, I confess, in thee,

Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield

Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe,

550

And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.

But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear!

The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!

My father, whom I seek through all the world,

He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"

555

As when some hunter in the spring hath found

A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,

Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,

And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,

And follow'd her to find her where she fell

560

Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back

From hunting, and a great way off descries

His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks

His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps

Circles above his eyry, with loud screams

565

Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she

Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,

In some far stony gorge out of his ken.

A heap of fluttering feathers: never more

Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;

570

Never the black and dripping precipices

Echo her stormy scream as she sails by:—

As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
 Over his dying son, and knew him not.

575

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said:—
 “What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
 The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—

“Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.

580

Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.

585

Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son!
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!
 Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!

Yet him I pity not so much, but her,

My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells

590

With that old king, her father, who grows grey
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.

Her most I pity, who no more will see

Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,

With spoils and honour, when the war is done.

595

But a dark rumour will be bruited up,

From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;

And then will that defenceless woman learn

That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;

But that in battle with a nameless foe,

600

By far distant Oxus, he is slain.”

He spoke; and as he ceased he wept aloud,

Thinking of her he left, and his own death.

He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.

Nor did he yet believe it was his son

605

Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;

For he had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him.
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms; 610
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son:
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he: yet he listen'd, plunged in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide 615
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon: tears gathered in his eyes:
For he remembered his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture: as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain lodge descries 620
A far bright City, smitten by the sun.
Through many rolling clouds;—so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old King, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child 625
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills 630
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the seythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut. 635
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:— 640

"O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved!
 But here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
 Have told thee false:—thou art not Rustum's son.
 For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
 But one—a girl: who with her mother now
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war."

645

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath: for now
 The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce.
 And he desired to draw forth the steel.
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die:
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

650

"Man, who art thou who dost deny my words? 655
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men.
 And falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine.
 I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
 That she might prick it on the babe she bore."

660

He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks;
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand.
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand.
 That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud:
 And to his heart he press'd the other hand.
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

665

"Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.
 If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son."

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
 His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
 And shew'd a sign in faint vermillion points
 Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin.
 .Pricks with vermillion some clear porcelain vase.
 An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,

And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp 675
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands:—

So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
 On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.

It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die. 680

A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
 Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and loved—

Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.

And Sohrab bared that figure on his arm.
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes. 685

And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—

“ How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?”

He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood 690
 Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—

O Boy—thy Father!—and his voice choked there.
 And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes.

And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.
 But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast

His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips. 695
 And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks.

Trying to call him back to life: and life
 Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes.

And they stood wide with horror; and he seized 700
 In both his hands the dust which lay around.

And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair.
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms:

And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast.
 And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his sword.

To draw it, and for ever let life out. 705
 But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hand,

And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said:—

“ Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day

The doom that at my birth was written down
 In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand, 710
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou.

When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
 I know it: but Fate trod those promptings down
 Under its iron heel: Fate. Fate engaged
 The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear. 715

But let us speak no more of this: I find
 My Father! let me feel that I have found.

Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
 My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
 And wash them with thy tears, and say, 'My Son!' 720
 Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
 And swift; for like the lightning to this field
 I came, and like the wind I go away—
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
 But it was writ in Heaven that this should be." 725

So said he: and his voice releas'd the heart
 Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
 His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
 And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
 When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse, 730
 With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
 Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
 First to the one then to the other moved
 His head, as if enquiring what their grief
 Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes, 735
 The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.
 But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—

"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
 Should then have rotten on thy nimble joints.
 When first they bore thy Master to this field." 740

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—
 "Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,

My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed!
 My terrible father's terrible horse: and said,
 That I should one day find thy lord and thee. 745
 Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
 O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I:
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go.
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan. 750
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
 Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
 Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food.
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
 And said—‘O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!— but I 755
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan.
 Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samareand. 760
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents: and only drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep.
 The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream— 765
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.”
 And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied.—
 “ Oh that its waves were flowing over me!
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!” 770
 And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—
 “ Desire not that, my father: thou must live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
 As some are born to be obscured, and die. 775
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
 And reap a second glory in thine age.

- Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come: thou seest this great host of men
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:
 Let me entreat for them: what have they done? 780
 They followed me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them.
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,
 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me, 785
 Thou, and the snow-haired Zal, and all thy friends.
 And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
 That so the passing horseman on the waste 790
 May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—
 And I be not forgotten in my grave.”
 And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:— 795
 “Fear not; as thou has said, Sohrab, my son,
 So shall it be: for I will burn my tents,
 And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me.
 And carry thee away to Seistan,
 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee. 800
 With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave. 805
 And I will spare thy host: yea, let him go:
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 What should I do with slaying any more?
 For would that all whom I have ever slain
 Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes, 810

And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown;

So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son!

815

Or rather would that I, even I myself,

Might now be lying on this bloody sand,

Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,

Not thou of mine; and I might die, not thou;

And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;

820

And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;

And say—O son, I weep thee not too sore.

For willingly, I know, thou meet'st thine end.—

But now in blood and battles was my youth,

And full of blood and battles is my age;

825

And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—

"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!

But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now;

Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day.

830

When thou shalt sail in a high-mastered ship,

Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,

Returning home over the salt blue sea,

From laying thy dear Master in his grave."

And Rustum gazed on Sohrab's face, and said:—

835

"Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea!

Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure."

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took

The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased

His wound's imperious anguish: but the blood

840

Came welling from the open gash, and life

Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold white side

The crimson torrent pour'd, dim now, and soil'd,

Like the soil'd tissue of white violets

- Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank, 845
 By romping children, whom their nurses call
 From the hot fields at noon: his head droop'd low,
 His limbs grew slack: motionless, white, he lay—
 White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
 Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame, 850
 Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left, 855
 And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.
 So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd 860
 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
 His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
 So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
- And night came down over the solemn waste, 865
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
 And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
 As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
 Began to twinkle through the fog: for now 870
 Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal:
 The Persians took it on the open sands
 Southward; the Tartars by the river marge:
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.
- But the majestic River floated on, 875
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
 Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
 Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,

- Under the solitary moon: he slow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè. 880
- Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams.
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles— 885
- Oxus forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere.
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright 890
- And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD

XVIII

ATALANTA'S RACE

ARGUMENT

Atalanta, daughter of King Schœneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that they should run a race with her in the public place, and if they failed to overcome her should die unrevenged; and thus many brave men perished. At last came Milanion, the son of Amphidamas, who, outrunning her with the help of Venus, gained the virgin and wedded her.

Through thick Arcadian woods a hunter went.
Following the beast up, on a fresh spring day:
But since his horn-tipped bow, but seldom bent,

Now at the noontide nought had happed to slay.
Within a vale he called his hounds away.
Harkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
About the cliffs and through the beech-trees ring.

But when they ended, still awhile he stood,
And but the sweet familiar thrush could hear,
And all the day-long noises of the wood.
And o'er the dry leaves of the vanished year
His hounds' feet patterning as they drew anear.
And heavy breathing from their heads low hung,
To see the mighty cornel bow unstrung.

Then smiling did he turn to leave the place.
But with his first step some new fleeting thought
A shadow cast across his sun-burnt face:
I think the golden net that April brought
From some warm world his wavering soul had caught;
For, sunk in vague sweet longing, did he go
Betwixt the trees with doubtful steps and slow.

Yet howsoever slow he went, at last
The trees grew sparser, and the wood was done:
Whereon one farewell, backward look he cast,
Then, turning round to see what place was won.
With shaded eyes looked underneath the sun.
And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown
Beheld the gleaming of King Schœneus' town.

So thitherward he turned, and on each side
The folk were busy on the teeming land.
And man and maid from the brown furrows cried.
Or midst the newly-blossomed vines did stand.
And as the rustic weapon pressed the hand

Thought of the nodding of the well-filled ear.
Or how the knife the heavy bunch should shear.

35

Merry it was: about him sung the birds.
The spring flowers bloomed along the firm dry road.
The sleek-skinned mothers of the sharp-horned herds
Now for the barefoot milking-maidens lowed;
While from the freshness of his blue abode, 40
Glad his death-bearing arrows to forget.
The broad sun blazed, nor scattered plagues as yet.

Through such fair things unto the gates he came,
And found them open, as though peace were there:
Wherethrough, unquestioned of his race or name. 45
He entered, and along the streets gan fare,
Which at the first of folk were well-nigh bare:
But pressing on, and going more hastily,
Men hurrying too he gan at last to see.

Following the last of these, he still pressed on. 50
Until an open space he came unto,
Where wreaths of fame had oft been lost and won.
For feats of strength folk there were wont to do,
And now our hunter looked for something new.
Because the whole wide space was bare, and stilled 55
The high seats were, with eager people filled.

There with the others to a seat he gat.
Whence he beheld a broidered canopy.
Neath which in fair array King Schœneus sat
Upon his throne with councillors thereby; 60
And underneath his well-wrought seat and high
He saw a golden image of the sun,
A silver image of the Fleet-foot One.

A brazen altar stood beneath their feet
 Whereon a thin flame flickered in the wind,
 Nigh this a herald clad in raiment meet
 Made ready even now his horn to wind.
 By whom a huge man held a sword, entwined
 With yellow flowers: these stood a little space
 From off the altar, nigh the starting-place.

65

70

And there two runners did the sign abide.
 Foot set to foot.—a young man slim and fair
 Crisp-haired, well knit, with firm limbs often tried
 In places where no man his strength may spare:
 Dainty his thin coat was, and on his hair
 A golden circlet of renown he wore.
 And in his hand an olive garland bore.

75

But on this day with whom shall he contend?
 A maid stood by him like Diana clad
 When in the woods she lists her bow to bend.
 Too fair for one to look on and be glad.
 Who scarcely yet has thirty summers had.
 If he must still behold her from afar:
 Too fair to let the world live free from war.

80

She seemed all earthly matters to forget:
 Of all tormenting lines her face was clear.
 Her wide grey eyes upon the goal were set
 Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near.
 But her foe trembled as a man in fear,
 Nor from her loveliness one moment turned
 His anxious face with fierce desire that burned.

85

90

Now through the hush there broke the trumpet's clang
 Just as the setting sun made eventide.

Then from light feet a spurt of dust there sprang.
And swiftly were they running side by side;
But silent did the thronging folk abide
Until the turning-post was reached at last.
And round about it still abreast they passed.

95

But when the people saw how close they ran,
When halfway to the starting-point they were.
A cry of joy broke forth, whereat the man
Headed the white-foot runner, and drew near
Unto the very end of all his fear;
And scarce his straining feet the ground could feel,
And bliss un hoped for o'er his heart gan steal.

100

1Q5

But midst the loud victorious shouts he heard
Her footsteps drawing nearer, and the sound
Of fluttering raiment, and thereat afeard
His flushed and eager face he turned around,
And even then he felt her past him bound
Fleet as the wind, but scarcely saw her there
Till on the goal she laid her fingers fair.

110

There stood she breathing like a little child
Amid some warlike clamour laid asleep;
For no victorious joy her red lips smiled.
Her cheek its wonted freshness did but keep;
No glance lit up her clear grey eyes and deep.
Though some divine thought softened all her face
As once more rang the trumpet through the place.

115

But her late foe stopped short amidst his course,
One moment gazed upon her piteously.
Then with a groan his lingering feet did force
To leave the spot whence he her eyes could see;

120

And, changed like one who knows his time must be
 But short and bitter, without any word 125
 He knelt before the bearer of the sword.

Then high rose up the gleaming deadly blade.
 Bared of its flowers, and through the crowded place
 Was silence now, and midst of it the maid 130
 Went by the poor wretch at a gentle pace.
 And he to hers upturned his sad white face:
 Nor did his eyes behold another sight
 Ere on his soul there fell eternal night.

So was the pageant ended, and all folk
 Talking of this and that familiar thing 135
 In little groups from that sad concourse broke.
 For now the shrill bats were upon the wing.
 And soon dark night would slay the evening.
 And in dark gardens sang the nightingale 140
 Her little-heeded, oft-repeated tale.

And with the last of all the hunter went.
 Who, wondering at the strange sight he had seen.
 Prayed an old man to tell him what it meant.
 Both why the vanquished man so slain had been.
 And if the maiden were an earthly queen.
 Or rather what much more she seemed to be.
 No sharer in the world's mortality.

"Stranger," said he, "I pray she soon may die
 Whose lovely youth has slain so many an one!" 150
 King Schœneus' daughter is she verily.
 Who when her eyes first looked upon the sun
 Was fain to end her life but new begun.
 For he had vowed to leave but men alone
 Sprung from his loins when he from earth was gone.

“Therefore he bade one leave her in the wood. 155
 And let wild things deal with her as they might,
 But this being done, some cruel god thought good
 To save her beauty in the world's despite:
 Folk say that her, so delicate and white
 As now she is, a rough root-grubbing bear 160
 Amidst her shapeless cubs at first did rear.

“In course of time the woodfolk slew her nurse,
 And to their rude abode the youngling brought,
 And reared her up to be a kingdom's curse,
 Who grown a woman, of no kingdom thought. 165
 But armed and swift, mid beasts destruction wrought,
 Nor spared two shaggy centaur kings to slay
 To whom her body seemd as easy prey.

“So to this city, led by fate, she came;
 Whom known by signs, whereof I cannot tell, 170
 King Schœneus for his child at last did claim,
 Nor otherwhere since that day doth she dwell,
 Sending too many a noble soul to hell—
 What! thine eyes glisten! what then, thinkest thou
 Her shining head unto the yoke to bow? 175

“Listen, my son, and love some other maid,
 For she the saffron gown will never wear,
 And on no flower-strewn couch shall she be laid,
 Nor shall her voice make glad a lover's ear!
 Yet if of Death thou hast not any fear. 180
 Yea, rather, if thou lov'st him utterly,
 Thou still may'st woo her ere thou com'st to die.

“Like him that on this day thou saw'st lie dead;
 For, fearing as I deem the Sea-born One.

The maid has vowed e'en such a man to wed
 As in the course her swift feet can outrun.
 But whoso fails herein, his days are done:
 He came the nighest that was slain to-day.
 Although with him I deem she did but play.

185

"Behold, such mercy Atalanta gives
 To those that long to win her loveliness;
 Be wise! be sure that many a maid there lives
 Gentler than she, of beauty little less.
 Whose swimming eyes thy loving words shall bless.
 When in some garden, knee set close to knee.
 Thou sing'st the song that love may teach to thee."

190

So to the hunter spake that ancient man,
 And left him for his own home presently:
 But he turned round, and through the moonlight wan .
 Reached the thick wood, and there twixt tree and tree 200
 Distraught he passed the long night feverishly,
 Twixt sleep and waking, and at dawn arose
 To wage hot war against his speechless foes.

There to the hart's flank seemed his shaft to grow.
 As panting down the broad green glades he flew.
 There by his horn the Dryads well might know
 His thrust against the bear's heart had been true.
 And there Adonis' bane his javelin slew.
 But still in vain through rough and smooth he went,
 For none the more his restlessness was spent.

205

210

So wandering, he to Argive cities came.
 And in the lists with valiant men he stood.
 And by great deeds he won him praise and fame.
 And heaps of wealth for little-valued blood;

But none of all these things, or life, seemed good 215
 Unto his heart, where still unsatisfied
 A ravenous longing warred with fear and pride.

Therefore it happed when but a month had gone
 Since he had left King Schœneus' city old,
 In hunting-gear again, again alone 220
 The forest-border meads did he behold,
 Where still mid thoughts of August's quivering gold
 Folk hoed the wheat, and clipped the vine in trust
 Of faint October's purple-foaming must.

And once again he passed the peaceful gate, 225
 While to his beating heart his lips did lie.
 That owning not victorious love and fate,
 Said, half aloud, "And here too must I try,
 To win of alien men the mastery,
 And gather for my head fresh meed of fame 230
 And cast new glory on my father's name."

In spite of that, how beat his heart, when first
 Folk said to him, "And art thou come to see
 That which still makes our city's name accurst
 Among all mothers for its cruelty? 235
 Then know indeed that fate is good to thee,
 Because to-morrow a new luckless one
 Against the whitefoot maid is pledged to run."

So on the morrow with no curious eyes
 As once he did, that piteous sight he saw, 240
 Nor did that wonder in his heart arise
 As toward the goal the conquering maid gan draw.
 Nor did he gaze upon her eyes with awe:
 Too full the pain of longing filled his heart
 For fear or wonder there to have a part. 245

But O, how long the night was ere it went!
 How long it was before the dawn begun
 Showed to the wakening birds the sun's intent
 That not in darkness should the world be done!
 And then, and then, how long before the sun
 Bade silently the toilers of the earth
 Get forth to fruitless cares or empty mirth!

250

And long it seemed that in the market-place
 He stood and saw the chaffering folk go by.
 Ere from the ivory throne King Schœneus' face
 Looked down upon the murmur royally.
 But then came trembling that the time was nigh
 When he midst pitying looks his love must claim,
 And jeering voices must salute his name.

255

But as the throng he pierced to gain the throne.
 His alien face distraught and anxious told
 What hopeless errand he was bound upon.
 And, each to each, folk whispered to behold
 His godlike limbs; nay, and one woman old
 As he went by must pluck him by the sleeve
 And pray him yet that wretched love to leave.

260

For sidling up she said, "Canst thou live twice.
 Fair son? canst thou have joyful youth again.
 That thus thou goest to the sacrifice
 Thyself the victim? nay then, all in vain
 Thy mother bore her longing and her pain.
 And one more maiden on the earth must dwell
 Hopeless of joy, nor fearing death and hell.

265

"O, fool, thou knowest not the compact then
 That with the three-formd goddess she has made

270

275

To keep her from the loving lips of men.
 And in no saffron gown to be arrayed.
 And therewithal with glory to be paid.
 And love of her the moonlit river sees
 White 'gainst the shadow of the formless trees. 280

“ Come back, and I myself will pray for thee
 Unto the sea-born framer of delights,
 To give thee her who on the earth may be
 The fairest stirrer up to death and fights
 To quench with hopeful days and joyous nights 285
 The flame that doth thy youthful heart consume;
 Come back nor give thy beauty to the tomb.”

How should he listen to her earnest speech?
 Words, such as he not once or twice had said
 Unto himself, whose meaning scarce could reach
 The firm abode of that sad hardihead—
 He turned about, and through the market-stead
 Swiftly he passed, until before the throne
 In the cleared space he stood at last alone.

Then said the King, “Stranger, what does thou here? 295
 Have any of my folk done ill to thee?
 Or art thou of forest men in fear?
 Or art thou of the sad fraternity
 Who still will strive my daughter's mates to be,
 Staking their lives to win to earthly bliss 300
 The lonely maid, the friend of Artemis?”

“ O King,” he said, “ thou sayest the word indeed:
 Nor will I quit the strife till I have won
 My sweet delight, or death to end my need.
 And know that I am called Milanion. 305

Of King Amphidamas the well-loved son:
 So fear not that to thy old name, O King.
 Much loss or shame my victory will bring."

"Nay, Prince," said Schœneus. "welcome to this land
 Thou wert indeed, if thou were here to try 310
 Thy strength 'gainst some one mighty of his hand;
 Nor would we grudge thee well-won mastery.
 But now, why wilt thou come to me to die,
 And at my door lay down thy luckless head.
 Swelling the band of the unhappy dead." 315

"Whose curses even now my heart doth fear?
 Lo, I am old, and know what life can be,
 And what a bitter thing is death anear.
 O son! be wise, and hearken unto me.
 And if no other can be dear to thee. 320
 At least as now, yet is the world full wide.
 And bliss in seeming-hopeless hearts may hide:

"But if thou loosest life, then all is lost."
 "Nay, King," Milanion said. "thy words are vain.
 Doubt not that I have counted well the cost. 325
 But say, on what day wilt thou that I gain
 Fulfilled the delight, or death to end my pain?
 Right glad were I if it could be to-day,
 And all my doubts at rest for ever lay."

"Nay," said King Schœneus, "thus it shall not be. 330
 But rather shalt thou let a month go by.
 And weary with thy prayers for victory
 What god thou know'st the kindest and most nigh.
 So doing, still perchance thou shalt not die;
 And with my goodwill wouldst thou have the maid 335
 For of the equal gods I grow afraid.

"And until then, O Prince, be thou my guest.
 And all these troublous things awhile forget."
 "Nay," said he, "couldst thou give my soul good rest.
 And on mine head a sleepy garland set. 340
 Then had I scaped the meshes of the net.
 Nor shouldst thou hear from me another word:
 But now, make sharp thy fearful heading sword.

"Yet will I do what son of man may do.
 And promise all the gods may most desire. 345
 That to myself I may at least be true:
 And on that day my heart and limbs so tire.
 With utmost strain and measureless desire.
 That, at the worst, I may but fall asleep
 When in the sunlight round that sword shall sweep." 350

He went therewith, nor anywhere would bide.
 But unto Argos restlessly did wend:
 And there, as one who lays all hope aside,
 Because the leech has said his life must end.
 Silent farewell he bade to foe and friend. 355
 And took his way unto the restless sea.
 For there he deemed his rest and help might be.

Upon the shore of Argolis there stand-
 A temple to the goddess that he sought.
 That, turned unto the lion-bearing lands. 360
 Fenced from the east, of cold winds hath no thought.
 Though to no homestead there the sheaves are brought.
 No groaning press torments the close-clipped murk.
 Lonely the fane stands, far from all men's work.

Pass through a close, set thick with myrtle-trees.
 Through the brass doors that guard the holy place. 365

And entering, hear the washing of the seas
 That twice a-day rise high above the base.
 And with the south-west urging them, embrace
 The marble feet of her that standeth there
 That shrink not, naked though they be and fair.

370

Small is the fane through which the seawind sings
 About Queen Venus' well-wrought image white.
 But hung around are many precious things.
 The gifts of those who, longing for delight,
 Have hung them there within the goddess' sight.
 And in return have taken at her hands
 The living treasures of the Grecian lands.

375

And thither now has come Milanion.
 And showed unto the priests' wide open eyes
 Gifts fairer than all those that there have shone.
 Silk cloths, inwrought with Indian fantasies.
 And bowls inscribed with sayings of the wise
 Above the deeds of foolish living things.
 And mirrors fit to be the gifts of kings.

380

And now before the Sea-born One he stands.
 By the sweet veiling smoke made dim and soft.
 And while the incense trickles from his hands.
 And while the odorous smoke-wreaths hand aloft.
 Thus doth he pray to her: "O Thou, who oft
 Hast holpen man and maid in their distress.
 Despite me not for this my wretchedness!"

385

"O goddess, among us who dwell below.
 Kings and great men, great for a little while.
 Have pity on the lowly heads that bow,
 Nor hate the hearts that love them without guile;

395

Wilt thou be worse than these, and is thy smile
 A vain device of him who set thee here,
 An empty dream of some artificer?

“ O, great one, some men love, and are ashamed; 400
 Some men are weary of the bonds of love;
 Yea, and by some men lightly art thou blamed,
 That from thy toils their lives they cannot move,
 And mid the ranks of men their manhood prove.
 Alas! O goddess, if thou slayest me 405
 What new immortal can I serve but thee?

“ Think then, will it bring honour to thy head
 If folk say, ‘ Everything aside he cast
 And to all fame and honour was he dead,
 And to his one hope now is dead at last, 410
 Since all unholpen he is gone and past:
 Ah, the gods love not man, for certainly.
 He to his helper did not cease to cry.’

“ Nay, but thou wilt help; they who died before
 Not single-hearted as I deem came here,
 Therefore unthanked they laid their gifts before
 Thy stainless feet, still shivering with their fear,
 Lest in their eyes their true thought might appear.
 Who sought to be the lords of that fair town,
 Dreaded of men and winners of renown. 420

“ O Queen, thou knowest I pray not for this:
 O set us down together in some place
 Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
 Where nought but rocks and I can see her face.
 Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace, 425
 Where not a foot our vanished steps can track—
 The golden age, the golden come back!

'O fairest, hear me now who do thy will.
 Plead for thy rebel that she be not slain.
 But live and love and be thy servant still:
 Ah, give her joy and take away my pain.
 And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
 An easy thing this is to do for me.
 What need of my vain words to weary thee!

430

"But none the less, this place will I not leave
 Until I needs must go my death to meet.
 Or at thy hands some happy sign receive
 That in great joy we twain may one day greet
 Thy presence here and kiss thy silver feet.
 Such as we deem thee, fair beyond all words
 Victorious o'er our servants and our lords."

435

440

Then from the altar back a space he drew.
 But from the Queen turned not his face away.
 But 'gainst a pillar leaned, until the blue
 That arched the sky, at ending of the day,
 Was turned to ruddy gold and changing grey.
 And clear, but low, the nigh-ebbed windless sea
 In the still evening murmured ceaselessly.

445

And there he stood when all the sun was down.
 Nor had he moved, when the dim golden light,
 Like the far lustre of a godlike town.
 Had left the world to seeming-hopeless night.
 Nor would he move the more when wan moonlight
 Streamed through the pillars for a little while,
 And lighted up the white Queen's changeless smile.

450

455

Nought noted he the shallow-flowing sea
 As step by step it set the wrack a-swim.

The yellow torchlight nothing noted he
 Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
 The temple damsels sung their midnight hymn.
 And nought the doubled stillness of the fane
 When they were gone and all was hushed again.

460

But when the waves had touched the marble base.

And steps the fish swim over twice a-day.

465

The dawn beheld him sunken in his place

Upon the floor; and sleeping there he lay.

Not heeding aught the little jets of spray

The roughened sea brought nigh, across him cast.
 For as one dead all thought from him had passed.

Yet long before the sun had showed his head.

470

Long ere the varied hangings on the wall
 Had gained once more their blue and green and red,

He rose as one some well-known sign doth call

When war upon the city's gates doth fall.

475

And scarce like one fresh risen out of sleep,

He gan again his broken watch to keep.

Then he turned round; not for the sea-gull's cry

That wheeled above the temple in his flight.

Not for the fresh south wind that lovingly

Breathed on the new-born day and dying night,

But some strange hope 'twixt fear and great delight

Drew round his face, now flushed, now pale and wan,

And still constrained his eyes the sea to scan.

Now a faint light lit up the southern sky.

485

Not sun nor moon, for all the world was grey.

But this a bright cloud seemed, that drew anigh.

Lighting the dull waves that beneath it lay

As toward the temple still it took its way.
 And still grew greater, till Milanion
 Saw nought for dazzling light that round him shone. 490

But as he staggered with his arms outspread.
 Delicious unnamed odours breathed around;
 For languid happiness he bowed his head.
 And with wet eyes sank down upon the ground,
 Nor wished for aught, nor any dream he found
 To give him reason for that happiness,
 Or make him ask more knowledge of his bliss. 495

At last his eyes were cleared, and he could see
 Through happy tears the goddess face to face
 With that faint image of Divinity,
 Whose well-wrought smile and dainty changeless grace
 Until that morn so gladdened all the place;
 Then he, unwitting, cried aloud her name
 And covered up his eyes for fear and shame. 500

But through the stillness he her voice could hear 505
 Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
 That said, "Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear?
 I am not hard to those who love me well;
 List to what I a second time will tell,
 And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
 The cruel maiden from a loveless grave. 510

" See, by my feet three golden apples lie—
 Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
 Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
 Store up within the best loved of my malls,
 Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
 Above my unseen head, and faint and light
 The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night. 515

" And note, that these are not alone most fair
 With heavenly gold, but longing strange they bring
 Unto the hearts of men, who will not care,
 Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
 Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
 And thou shalt see thy well-girt swiftfoot maid
 By sight of these amidst her glory stayed.

520

525

" For bearing these within a scription with thee,
 When first she heads thee from the starting-place
 Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,
 And when she turns aside make on apace,
 And if again she heads thee in the race
 Spare not the other two to cast aside
 If she not long enough behind will bide.

530

" Farewell, and when has come the happy time
 That she Diana's raiment must unbind
 And all the world seems blessed with Saturn's clime 535
 And thou with eager arms about her twined
 Beholdest first her grey eyes growing kind,
 Surely, O trembler, thou shalt scarcely then
 Forget the Helper of unhappy men."

540

Milanion raised his head at this last word,
 For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
 No longer of her Godhead was he feard;
 Too late he looked, for nothing could he see
 But the white image glimmering doubtfully
 In the departing twilight cold and grey,
 And those three apples on the steps that lay.

545

These then he caught up quivering with delight,
 Yet fearful lest it all might be a dream,

And though aweary with the watchful night,
And sleepless nights of longings, still did deem
He could not sleep: but yet the first sunbeam
That smote the fane across the heaving deep
Shone on him laid in calm untroubled sleep.

550

But little ere the noontide did he rise,
And why he felt so happy scarce could tell
Until the gleaming apples met his eyes.
Then leaving the fair place where this befell
Oft he looked back as one who loved it well,
Then homeward to the haunts of men gan wend
To bring all things unto a happy end.

555

560

Now has the lingering month at last gone by.
Again are all folk round the running place,
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry
Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race.
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

565

But yet—what change is this that holds the maid?
Does she indeed see in his glittering eye
More than disdain of the sharp shearing blade,
Some happy hope of help and victory?
The others seemed to say, "We come to die.
Look down upon us for a little while,
That dead, we may bethink us of thy smile."

570

But he—what look of mastery was this
He cast on her? why were his lips so red?
Why was his face so flushed with happiness?
So looks not one who deems himself but dead,

575

E'en if to death he bows a willing head:
So rather looks a god well pleased to find
Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

580

Why must she drop her lids before his gaze,
And even as she casts adown her eyes
Redden to note his eager glance of praise.
And wish that she were clad in other guise? 585
Why must the memory to her heart arise
Of things unnoticed when they first were heard.
Some lover's song, some answering maiden's word?

What makes these longings, vague, without a name,
And this vain pity never felt before, 590
This sudden languor, this contempt of fame,
This tender sorrow for the time past o'er,
These doubts that grow each minute more and more?
Why does she tremble as the time grows near,
And weak defeat and woeful victory fear? 595

Now while she seemed to hear her beating heart.
Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out
And forth they sprang; and she must play her part
Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt.
Though slackening once, she turned her head about.
But then she cried aloud and faster fled 600
Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand,
And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew
And past the maid rolled on along the sand:
Then trembling she her feet together drew
And in her heart a strong desire there grew
To have the toy, some god she thought had given
That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven. 605

Then from the course with eager steps she ran,
And in her odorous bosom laid the gold.
But when she turned again, the great-limbed man,
Now well ahead she failed not to behold,
And mindful of her glory waxing cold.
Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit,
Though with one hand she touched the golden fruit.

610

615

Note too, the bow that she was wont to bear
She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize.
And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair
Three arrows fell and lay before her eyes
Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries
She sprang to head the strong Milanion,
Who now the turning-post had well-nigh won.

620

But as he set his mighty hand on it
White fingers underneath his own were laid,
And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit.
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid:
She ran awhile, and then as one afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay.
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

625

630

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had she
To win the day, though now but scanty space
Was left betwixt him and the winning place.

635

Short was the way unto such winged feet.
Quickly she gained upon him till at last

He turned about her eager eyes to meet
 And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
 She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
 After the prize that should her bliss fulfil,
 That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win
 Once more, an unblest woeful victory —
 And yet—and yet—why does her breath begin
 To fail her, and her feet drag heavily?
 Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
 The goal is? why do her grey eyes grow dim?
 Why do these tremors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find,
 Else must she fall indeed, and findeth this,
 A strong man's arms about her body twined.
 Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
 So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss:
 Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,
 She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

Shatter the trumpet, hew adown the posts!
 Upon th brazen altar break the sword,
 And scatter incense to appease the ghosts
 Of those who died here by their own award.
 Bring forth the image of the mighty Lord,
 And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,
 And did a deed for ever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk, make no delay,
 Open King Scheneus' well-filled treasury,
 Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day,
 The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,

Gold chains; and unguents brought from over sea. 670
The saffron gown the old Phœnician brought,
Within the temple of the Goddess wrought.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that Love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory.
In some cool bower do all that now is due!
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich enow,
Her maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow.

—WILLIAM MORRIS

XIX

A RAJPUT NURSE

" May it please you," quoth Vittoo, salaaming, " Protector
of all the poor! 5
It was not for holy Brahman they carved that delicate door;
Nor for Yogi, nor Rajput Rana, built they this gem of
our land;
But to tell of a Rajput woman, as long as the stones
should stand.

"Her name was Moti, the pearl-name; 'twas far in the
 ancient times;
 But her moon-like face and her teeth of pearl are sung
 of still in our rhymes; 10
 And because she was young, and comely, and of good repute,
 and had laid
 A babe in the arms of her husband, the Palace-Nurse she
 was made:

"For the sweet chief-queen of the Rana in Joudpore city
 had died,
 Leaving a motherless infant, the heir to that race of pride;
 The heir of the peacock-banner, of the five-coloured flag,
 of the throne 15
 Which traces its record of glory from days when it ruled alone;

"From times when, forth from the sunlight, the first of
 our kings came down
 And had the earth for his footstool, and wore the stars
 for his crown,
 As all good Rajputs have told us, so Moti was proud and true,
 With the Prince of the land on her bosom, and her own
 brown baby too. 20

"And the Rajput women will have it (I know not myself
 of these things)
 As the two babes lay on her lap there, her lord's, and
 the Joudpore King's;
 So loyal was the blood of her body, so fast the faith
 of her heart,
 It passed to her new-born infant, who took her trust its part.

" He would not suck of the breast-milk till the Prince had
drunken his fill; 25
He would not sleep to the cradle-song till the Prince was
 lulled and still;
 And he lay at night with his small arms clasped round
 the Rana's child,
 As if those hands like the rose-leaf could shelter from
 treason wild.

"For treason was wild in the country, and villainous men
had sought
The life of the heir of the gadi, to the Palace in secret
brought; 30
With bribes to the base, and with knife-thrusts for the
faithful, they made their way
Through the line of the guards, and the gateways, to the
hall where the women lay.

"There Moti, the foster-mother, sat singing the children to rest
Her baby at play on her crossed knees, and the King's son
held to her breast;
And the dark slave-maidens round her beat low on the
cymbal's skin 35
Keeping the time of her soft song—when—Saheb!—
there hurried in

"A breathless watcher, who whispered, with horror in
eyes and face:
'Oh! Moti! men come to murder my Lord the Prince
in this place!
They have bought the help of the gate-guards, or slaughtered
them unawares.
Hark! that is the noise of their tulwars, the clatter upon
the stairs!' 40

"For one breath she caught her baby from her lap to her heart, and let The King's child sink from her nipple, with lips still clinging and wet, Then tore from the Prince his head-cloth, and the putta of pearls from his waist. And bound the belt on her infant, and the cap on his brows, in haste;

"And laid her own dear offspring, her flesh and blood,
on the floor, 45
With the girdle of pearls around him, and the cap that the
King's son wore:
While close to her heart, which was breaking, she folded
the Raja's joy.
And—even as the murderers lifted the purdah—she fled with
his boy.

"But there (so they deemed) in his jewels, lay the Chota
Rana, the Heir;
'The cow with two calves has escaped us,' cried one, 'it
is right and fair 50
She should save her own baby; no matter! the edge of the
dagger ends
This spark of Lord Raghoba's sunlight; stab thrice and
four times, O friends.'

" And the Rajput women will have it (I know not if this
can be so)
That Moti's son in the *putta* and golden cap cooed low,
When the sharp blades met in his small heart, with never
one moan or wince, 55-
But died with a babe's light laughter, because he died
for his prince.

"Thereby did that Rajput mother preserve the line
of our Kings."

"Oh! Vittoo," I said. "but they gave her much gold and
beautiful things,
And garments, and land for her people, and a home in the
Palace! May be
She had grown to love that Princeling even more than the
child on her knee." 60

"May it please the Presence!" quoth Vittoo." it seemeth
not so! they gave
The gold and the garments and jewels, as much as the
proudest would have;
But the same night deep in her true heart she buried a
knife, and smiled,
Saying this: "I have saved my Rana! I must go to
suckle my child!"

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

XX

GATES OF DAMASCUS

Four great gates has the city of Damascus,
And four Grand Wardens, on their spears reclining,
All day long stand like tall stone men
And sleep on the towers when the moon is shining.

This is the song of the East Gate Warden 5
When he locks the great gate and smokes in his
garden.

GATES OF DAMASCUS

Postern of Fate. the Desert Gate. Disaster's Cavern.
 Fort of Fear.
 The Portal of Bagdad am I, the Doorway of Diarbekir.

The Persian Dawn with new desires may net the flushing
 mountain spires:
 By my gaunt buttress still rejects the suppliance of
 those mellow fires. 10

Pass not beneath, O Caravan, or pass not singing.
 Have you heard
 That silence where the birds are dead yet something
 pipeth like a bird?

Pass not beneath! Men say there blows in stony deserts
 still a rose
 But with no scarlet to her leaf—and from whose heart
 no perfume flows.

Wilt thou bloom red where she buds pale, thy sister rose?
 Wilt thou not fail 15
 When noonday flashes like a flail? Leave, nightingale.
 the caravan!

Pass then, pass all! "Bagdad!" ye cry, and down the
 billows of blue sky
 Ye beat the bell that beats to hell, and who shall thrust
 ye back? Not I.

The Sun who flashes through the head and paints the
 shadows green and red—
 The Sun shall eat thy fleshless dead, O Caravan, O Caravan! 20

And one who licks his lips for thirst with fevered eyes
shall face in fear
The palms that wave, the streams that burst, his last mirage.
O Caravan!

And one—the bird-voiced Singing-man—shall fall behind
thee. Caravan!
And God shall meet him in the night, and he shall sing as
best he can.

And one the Bedouin shall slay, and one, sand-stricken
on the way 25
Go dark and blind; and one shall say—"How lonely is the
Caravan!"

Pass out beneath, O Caravan, Doom's Caravan. Death's
Caravan!

I had not told ye, fools, so much, save that I heard your
Singing-man.

*This was sung by the West Gate's keeper
When heaven's hollow dome grew deeper.* 30

I am the gate toward the sea: O sailor men, pass out from me!
I hear you high on Lebanon, singing the marvels of the sea.

The dragon-green, the luminous, the dark, the serpent-haunted sea,
The snow-besprinkled wine of earth, the white-and-blue-flower foaming sea.

Beyond the sea are towns with towers, carved with lions and
lily flowers, 35
And not a soul in all those lonely streets to while away
the hours

Beyond the isle a rock that screams like madmen shouting
in their dreams,
From whose dark issues night and day blood crashes in
a thousand streams. 10

Beyond the rock is Restful Bay, where no wind breathes
or ripple stirs,
And there on Roman ships, they say, stand rows of
metal mariners.

Beyond the bay in utmost West old Solomon the Jewish King
Sits with his beard upon his breast, and grips and guards
his magic ring:

And when that ring is stolen, he will rise in outraged
majesty. 45
And take the World upon his back, and fling the World
beyond the sea.

*This is the song of the North Gate's master.
Who singeth fast, but drinketh faster.*

I am the gay Aleppo Gate: a dawn, a dawn and thou
art there:
Eat not thy heart with fear and care, O brother of the
beast we hate! 50

Thou hast not many miles to tread, nor other foes than
 fleas to dread:
 Homs shall behold thy morning meal and Hama see thee
 safe in bed.

Take to Aleppo filigrane, and take them paste of apricots.
 And coffee tables botched with pearl, and little beaten
 brassware pots:

And thou shalt sell thy wares for thrice the Damascene
 retailers' price. 55
 And buy a fat Armenian slave who smelleth odorous and nice.

Some men of noble stock were made: some glory in the
 murder-blade:
 Some praise a Science or an Art, but I like honourable Trade!

Sell them the rotten, buy the ripe! Their heads are weak:
 their pockets burn:
 Aleppo men are mighty fools. Salaam Aleikum!
 Safe return! 60

*This the song of the South Gate Holder,
 A silver man, but his song is older.*

I am the Gate that fears no fall: the Mihrab of Damascus wall-
 The bridge of booming Sinai: the Arch of Allah all in all.

O spiritual pilgrim rise: the night has grown her
 single horn: 65
 The voices of the souls unborn are half adream with Paradise.

To Meccah thou hast turned in prayer with aching heart
and eyes that burn:
Ah Hajji, whither wilt thou turn when thou art there?
when thou art there?

God be thy guide from camp to camp: God be thy shade
from well to well;
God grant beneath the desert stars thou hear the
Prophet's camel bell. 70

And God shall make thy body pure, and give thee
knowledge to endure
This ghost-life's piercing phantom-pain, and bring thee
out to Life again.

And son of Islam, it may be that thou shalt learn at
journey's end 75
Who walks thy garden eve on eve, and bows his head, and
call thee Friend.

—JAMES ELROY FLECKER

XXI

UNCONQUERABLE

Out of the night that covers me.

Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not wince nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

—WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

THE SOLDIER

XXII

THE SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be

In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;

A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,

5

Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,

A body of England's, breathing English air,

Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,

10

A pulse in the eternal mind, no less

Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;

Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;

And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,

In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

—RUPERT BROOKE

XXIII

A PASSER-BY

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding.

Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,

That fearest nor sea rising nor sky clouding,

Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?

Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales opprest,

When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling.

Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest

In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling?

5

I there before thee, in the country that well thou knowest.

10

Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air;

I watch thee enter unerringly where thou goest.

And anchor queen of the strange shipping there.

Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts bare;

Nor is aught from the foaming reef to the snow-capp'd, grandest

15

Peak, that is over the feathery palms more fair

Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still thou standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhail'd and nameless.

I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly divine

That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage blameless.

Thy port assured in a happier land than mine.

But for all I have given thee, beauty enough is thine.

As thou, aslant with trim tackle and shrouding.

From the proud nostril curve of a prow's line
In the offing scatterest foam, thy white sails crowding.

20

—ROBERT BRIDGES

XXIV

BEYOND THE LAST LAMP

(Near Tooting Common)

I

While rain, with eve in partnership,
 Descended darkly, drip, drip, drip,
 Beyond the last lone lamp I passed

Walking slowly, whispering sadly,
 Two linked loiterers, wan, downcast:
 Some heavy thought constrained each face,
 And blinded them to time and place.

5

II

The pair seemed lovers, yet absorbed
 In mental scenes no longer orb'd
 By love's young rays. Each countenance
 As it slowly, as it sadly
 Caught the lamplight's yellow glance,
 Held in suspense a misery
 At things which had been or might be.

10

III

When I retrud that watery way
 Some hours beyond the droop of day,
 Still I found pacing there the twain
 Just as slowly, just as sadly,
 Heedless of the night and rain.
 One could but wonder who they were,
 And what wild woe detained them there.

15

20

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

IV

Though thirty years of blur and blot
 Have slid since I beheld that spot.
 And saw in curious converse there
 Moving slowly, moving sadly.
 That mysterious tragic pair,
 Its olden look may linger on—
 All but the couple: they have gone.

25

V

Whither? Who knows, indeed . . . And yet
 To me, when nights are weird and wet.
 Without those comrades there at tryst
 Creeping slowly, creeping sadly.
 That lone lane does not exist.
 There they seem brooding on their pain.
 And will, while such a lane remain.

30

35

—THOMAS HARDY

XXV

THE FLANNAN ISLE

“ Though three men dwell on Flannan Isle
 To keep the lamp alight,
 As we steer'd under the lee, we caught
 No glimmer through the night!”

5

A passing ship at dawn had brought
 The news: and quickly we set sail.
 To find out what strange thing might ail
 The keepers of the deep-sea light.

The winter day broke blue and bright,
With glancing sun and glancing spray.
As o'er the swell our boat made way.
As gallant as a gull in flight.

10

But, as we neared the lonely Isle;
And look'd up at the naked height:
And saw the lighthouse towering white,
With blinded lantern, that all night
Had never shot a spark
Of comfort through the dark.
So ghostly in the cold sunlight
It seem'd, that we were struck the while
With wonder all too dread for words.

15

20

And, as into the tiny creek
We stole beneath the hanging crag.
We saw three queer, black, ugly birds—
Too big, by far, in my belief.
For guillemot or shag—
Like seamen sitting bolt-upright
Upon a half-tide reef:
But as we near'd, they plunged from sight,
Without a sound, or spurt of white.

25

30

And still too mazed to speak,
We landed; and made fast the boat;
And climb'd the track in single file.
Each wishing he was safe afloat.
On any sea, however far,
So it be far from Flannan Isle:
And still we seem'd to climb, and climb,
As though we'd lost all count of time.
And so must climb for evermore.

35

Yet, all too soon, we reached the door—
The black, sun-blister'd lighthouse-door.
That gaped for us ajar.

As, on the threshold, for a spell.
We paused, we seem'd to breathe the smell
Of limewash and of tar. 45
Familiar as our daily breath,
As though 'twere some strange scent of death:
And so, yet wondering, side by side,
We stood a moment, still tongue-tied:
And each with black foreboding eyed 50
The door, ere we should fling it wide,
To leave the sunlight for the gloom:
Till, plucking courage up, at last,
Hard on each other's heels we pass'd
Into the living-room. 55

Yet, as we crowded through the door.
We only saw a table, spread
For dinner, meat and cheese and bread;
But all untouched; and no one there:

As though, when they sat down to eat,
Ere they could even taste,
Alarm had come; and they in haste
Had risen and left the bread and meat;
For at the table-head a chair 60
Lay tumbled on the floor.
We listen'd; but we only heard
The feeble cheeping of a bird
That starved upon its perch:
And, listening still, without a word, 65
We set about our hopeless search. 70

We hunted high, we hunted low,
 And soon ransack'd the empty house;
 Then o'er the Island, to and fro,
 We ranged, to listen and to look
 In every cranny, cleft or nook 75
 That might have hid a bird or mouse:
 But, though we search'd from shore to shore,
 We found no sign in any place:
 And soon again stood face to face
 Before the gaping door: 80
 And stole into the room once more
 As frighten'd children steal.

Aye: though we hunted high and low,
 And hunted everywhere,
 Of the three men's fate we found no trace 85
 Of any kind in any place,
 But a door ajar, and an untouched meal,
 And an overthrown chair.

And, as we listen'd in the gloom
 Of that forsaken living-room—
 A chill clutch on our breath—
 We thought how ill-chance came to all
 Who kept the Flannan Light:
 And how the rock had been the death
 Of many a likely lad: 95

How six had come to a sudden end
 And three had gone stark mad:
 And one whom we'd all known as friend
 Had leapt from the lantern one still night,
 And fallen dead by the lighthouse wall: 100
 And long we thought

On the three we sought,
And of what might yet befall.

Like curs a glance has brought to heel.

105

We listen'd, flinching there:

And look'd, and look'd, on the untouched meal

And the overthrown chair.

We seem'd to stand for an endless while.

Though still no word was said.

110

Three men alive on Flannan Isle,

Who thought on three men dead.

—WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

XXVI

THE ROYAL TOMBS OF GOLCONDA

I muse among these silent fane
Whose spacious darkness guards your dust:
Around me sleep the hoary plains
That hold your ancient wars in trust.

5

I pause, my dreaming spirit hears.

Across the wind's unquiet tides.

The glimmering music of your spears,
The laughter of your royal brides.

In vain. O Kings, doth time aspire
To make your names oblivion's sport,
While yonder hill wears like a tiar
The ruined grandeur of your fort.
Though centuries falter and decline.
Your proven strongholds shall remain

10

FOR THE FALLEN

139

Embodied memories of your line,
Incarnate legends of your reign.

15

O Queens, in vain Old Fate decreed
Your flower-like bodies to the tomb;
Death is in truth the vital seed
Of your imperishable bloom,
Each new-born year the bulbuls sing
Their songs of your renascent loves:
Your beauty wakens with the spring
To kindle these pomegranate groves.

20

—SAROJINI NAIDU

XXVII

FOR THE FALLEN

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children.
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

5

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle. they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow. 10
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
 Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
 At the going down of the sun and in the morning
 We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
 They sit no more at familiar tables at home;
 They have no lot in our labour of the day-time:
 They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
 Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
 To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
 As the stars are known to the night.

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust.
 Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
 As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
 To the end, to the end, they remain.

—LAURENCE BINYON

XXVIII

LEISURE

What is this life if, full of care,
 We have no time to stand and stare?

No time to stand beneath the boughs
 And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

5

No time to see, in broad daylight.
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

10

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care.
We have no time to stand and stare.

—W. H. DAVIES

XXIX

A CONSECRATION

Not of the princes and prelates with periwigged charioteers
Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the years,
Rather the scorned—the rejected—the men hemmed in
with the spears;
The men of the tattered battalion which fights till it dies.
Dazed with the dust of the battle, the din and the cries.
The men with the broken heads and the blood running into
their eyes.

5

Not the be-medalled Commander, beloved of the throne.
Riding cock-horse to parade when the bugles are blown.
But the lads who carried the koppie and cannot be known.
Not the ruler for me, but the ranker, the tramp of the road. 10
The slave with the sack on his shoulders pricked on with
the goad,
The man with too weighty a burden, too weary a load.

The sailor, the stoker of steamers, the man with the clout.
The chantyman bent at the halliards putting a tune to the shout.
The drowsy man at the wheel and the tired look-out. 15
Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth.
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth:—
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of the earth!

Theirs be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold:
Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.
Of the maimed, of the halt and the blind in the rain and
the cold—
Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tale be told. Amen

—JOHN MASEFIELD

XXX

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree.

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow, 5
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore; 10
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
 I hear it in the deep heart's core.

—WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

XXXI

WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth:
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection; 5
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into
the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening
thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

NOTES

I

ON HIS BLINDNESS

If John Milton (1608—1674) is universally popular as the author of the great epic, *Paradise Lost*, he is also the author of a number of other poems, including a few sonnets of great merit. A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines in Iambic pentametre, rhyming in accordance with various systems, Italian, Shakespearean and Spenserian. It has rigorous unity of thought and ends in a climax. See other sonnets in this volume, *Hope* by William Bowles and *Night* by Blanco White.

Milton's greatness as a poet is based as much on the purity and depth of his religious fervour as on the richness of his imagination, musical power and command of poetic vocabulary. Milton lost his eyesight in 1652, in his forty-fourth year and this sonnet was written in 1665. He wonders whether his blindness does not prevent him from doing the work his Master expected of him, but he consoles himself with the thought that even those who calmly bear the judgment of God serve him. Milton bewails his blindness in a famous passage in his *Paradise Lost* addressing the Sun:

Thus with the year

Seasons return; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of eve or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose.
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off. and. for the book of knowledge fair,

Presented with a universal blank
 Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

II

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

An elegy, at least in modern times, is a poem of lamentation written on the death of some individual like Tennyson's *In Memoriam* on his friend, Arthur Hallam, or Shelley's *Adonais*, on the young poet, Keats. The *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray (1716—1771) is however not written on any particular individual; it contains melancholy reflections on death and immortality. Gray spent years over the composition of this poem and polished it with great care, exhibiting finished workmanship. The Elegy was written in the churchyard of Stoke Poges, a little village near Windsor.

- L. 1. *Curfew*: a bell rung at a particular hour at night, usually at eight o'clock in Norman times, calling on people to put out their lights and fires, as a precaution against fire in the days of wooden houses (from French *couver-feu*, cover fire).
- L. 37. *The boast of heraldry*: the boasting of those who are entitled to wear coats of arms recognised by the College of Heralds.
- L. 48. *Waked to ecstasy the living lyre*: produced such fine music that it would have seemed alive and in raptures.

- L. 57. *Hampden*: the well-known English patriot who opposed the exactions of Charles I.
- L. 59. *Milton*: the great English poet, author of *Paradise Lost*.
- L. 60. *Cromwell*: Oliver Cromwell (1599—1658) the Protector, who ruled England for sometime after the execution of Charles I.
- L. 61. *Senate*: often, the legislative body or parliament of a country, used extensively in India in connection with the legislative bodies of universities.
- L. 97. *Haply*: ‘Perhaps,’ not ‘happily.’
Epitaph: what is written on a tomb—from Greek *epi*, upon and *taphos*, a tomb.
-

III THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Oliver Goldsmith (1728—1774) laments in this poem the deserted condition of his native village, owing to the gradual migration of people to urban areas. There is a similar movement in India to-day and this description will apply to several villages in this country, with some changes. Goldsmith is as elegant and graceful in his poetry as he is in his prose. There is an air of pensive melancholy about this piece due to the reflections suggested by the deserted village.

Read also his *Traveller*.

- L. 1. *Auburn*: an imaginary name, Goldsmith’s native village in Ireland being Lissoy.
- L. 44. *Bittern*: a bird resembling the heron, of solitary habits, that frequents marshes.

- L. 45. *Lapwing*: a bird of the plover family.
- L. 54. The mere word of a king can make and unmake noblemen.
- L. 63. *Train*: here, those who pursue trade.
- L. 95. *Long vexatious past*: an example of the nominative absolute.
- L. 107. *Latter end*: death.
- Ll. 137—162. This picture of the village clergymen was suggested to Goldsmith, in some measure, by his own brother.
- L. 137. *Copse*: contrasted from *coppice*, a wood of low growth.
- L. 142. *Passing*: surpassing.
- Ll. 189—92. Considered one of the finest similes in the English language.
- Ll. 193—218. It has been suggested that Goldsmith drew his sketch of the school master from his own teacher, Thomas Bryne at Lissoy. He had retired from an Irish regiment after having fought under the Duke of Marlborough.
- L. 232. *Twelve good rules*: rules of good conduct often hung up in public houses of the time including such precepts as 'Keep no bad company,' 'lay no wagers,' etc.
- Game of goose*: a game played on a board divided into compartments some of which had the picture of a goose.
- L. 243. *The barber's tale*: barbers have always been known to be great gossips.
- L. 259. *Masquerade*: a dance or an entertainment in which people wore masks that they may not be recognised.

- L. 318. *Gibbet*: gallows, hanging being the punishment for many crimes in those days.
- L. 344. *Altama*: a river in Georgia, in North America.
- L. 355. *Crouching tigers*: Goldsmith did not apparently know there were no tigers in America!
- L. 404. *Connubial*: belonging to the married state.
- L. 414. *Torno's cliffs*: the mountains round Lake Tornea in the north of Sweden.
- L. 418. *Pambamarca*: one of the peaks of the Andes in South America.
-

IV

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE

William Cowper (1731—1800) wrote in a simple and natural manner and is one of our most graceful poets. This poem, like his beautiful letters, reveals his gentle and lovable personality and embodies his tenderness of domestic affections. The picture was received from Norfolk and was the gift of his cousin, Mrs. Anne Bodham. Cowper lost his mother when he was only six years old and this poem was written fifty years later, but the sentiment of sorrow is still powerful and touching.

Acknowledging the present, Cowper wrote to his cousin: "The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last and received it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I

should have felt had its dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it and hung it where it is the last object which I see at night and the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year: yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember too a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression.

- L. 9. *The art.....claim:* the art of painting which frustrates Time's attempts to make things forgotten.
 - L. 20. *Elysian:* from Elysium, the abode of the blest after death, according to Greek mythology, a place of ideal happiness.
 - L. 88. *Albion's coast:* the coast of Britain, Albion being the poetic name, suggested perhaps from the white cliffs (Lat. *Albus*) visible from the coast of Gaul.
-

V HOPE

Though William Bowles (1762—1850) has written only a handful of sonnets, he is remembered as the inspirer of Wordsworth in the art of sonnet-writing. Coleridge was one of his enthusiastic admirers in his boyhood and it is not wrong to state that he was among those responsible for the awakening of his poetic sense.

VI

THE HAPPY WARRIOR

This poem by William Wordsworth (1770—1850) contains his ideal of a happy warrior. He is one who not only fights physical battles, but also the temptations and spiritual conflicts which face man's life. Wordsworth said that this poem was suggested to him by the death of Lord Nelson, though it must be clearly understood that this was not meant to be a description of the great naval hero of Trafalgar, particularly in matters relating to his private life and domestic morality. This poem has been called, "a summary of patriotism, a manual of national honour" and a picture of "English character at its height."

A great lover of Nature and one deeply interested in the emotions of every day life. Wordsworth is pre-eminently a poet of introspection, while his love of simplicity has established a new tradition in English poetry.

Ll. 4 and 5. *Hast wrought.....thought*: has worked upon the ideals which pleased his boyhood.

L. 21. *Placable*: easily appeased, forgiving, unrevengeful.

L. 22. *Such sacrifice*: of feelings of revenge.

Ll. 29—34. Some people justify a wrong act by saying that they did it to avoid something worse, but he disregarded such considerations and always did the right.

L. 43. *Showers of Manna*: the reference is to the food of the gods which fell from heaven to nourish the Israelites in the wilderness.

L. 47. *Peculiar*: to himself, distinctive.

L. 57. *Endued*: old spelling of endowed.

- L. 59. *Master-bias*: an over-mastering tendency in a particular direction.
- L. 82. *The mortal mist*: the darkness of death.
 See Browning's *Prospice*:
 Fear Death? To feel the fog in my throat
 The mist in my face.
-

VII

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is one of the most well-known poems of English literature. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772—1834) was the friend of William Wordsworth and was a poet of considerable eminence. By his wonderful command of musical words and his powerful imagination he has achieved lasting recognition. There is a weird supernaturalism about his narration and the use of antiquated words is to give it the air of an old ballad. The archaic words will all be found explained in a good dictionary. Special attention is invited to the marginal notes furnished by Coleridge himself, which not only make the action of the poem clearer, but also possess a subtle and quiet charm of their own.

- L. 12. *Eftsoons*: soon after.
- L. 36. *Minstrelsy*: company of minstrels or singers.
- L. 55. *Cliffs*: cliffs, the icebergs gleaming through the snow and mist.
- L. 62. *Swound*: swoon.
- L. 63. *An Albatross*: the sea-bird, the killing of which was supposed to bring ill-luck.

- L. 69. *Thunder-fit*: clap of thunder.
- L. 128. *Death-fires*: phosphorescent lights on the water forecasting death.
- L. 129. *A witch's oils*: the ingredients used by a witch for making her magic potions.
- L. 132. *The Spirit*: the spirit of the South Pole.
- L. 175. *That strange shape*: the skeleton ship of his friend's dream is worked up into a farewell omen.
- L. 212. *The star-dogged moon*: it is a superstition among sailors that a star dogging the moon indicates the coming of disaster.
- L. 314. *Fire-flags*: the wandering fires or *ignes fatui* which often appear on the sea in stormy weather.
- L. 325. *Never a jag*: without forked flashes.
- L. 435. *A charnel dungeon*: a vault for the burial of corpses.
- L. 512. *Shrieve*: absolve.
- L. 532. *The ivy-tod*: a thick bush of ivy.

VIII
THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES

Charles Lamb (1775—1834) recalls here the friends of his childhood and later years who have now disappeared. He has written in the same vein in his famous *Essays of Elia* of the various friends of his life. Undoubtedly more eminent as essayist than as poet, this is one of the few poetical pieces written by Charles Lamb.

This has been called, the loveliest of Charles Lamb's poems, "one entire and perfect chrysolite." It originally began with a stanza which was later omitted by Charles Lamb as being too tragic:

Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?
I had a mother, but she died and left me.
Died prematurely in a day of horrors—
All, all are gone the old familiar faces.

Lamb's mother was killed by his sister, Mary Lamb, in a fit of insanity.

L. 9. *I loved a Love once*: 'the fair-haired Alice,' the Anna of his sonnets.

Ll. 13-14. *I have a friend.....abruptly*: it has been suggested that the reference is to a temporary estrangement with his great friend, the poet Coleridge.

IX NIGHT

Coleridge declared this "the finest and most grandly conceived sonnet in our language" and that is the reason for including it in this volume. It has sometimes the expanded title, *Night and Death*. Joseph Blanco White (1775-1841) was born in Spain and took orders, but abandoned his priesthood and came to Britain later and settled at Oriel College, Oxford.

L. 1. *Our first parent*: Adam, according to the Bible.
L. 7. *Hesperus*: the evening star.

X THE CROWDED HOUR

These four lines of Sir Walter Scott (1771—1832) not only describe a praiseworthy ideal of life and action, but are also an admirable commentary on the spirit of his own work. More well-known perhaps as novelist than as poet, Sir Walter's work in verse is yet not negligible and is full of romance and adventure. These lines constitute an introductory motto to the twenty-third chapter of his novel, *Old Mortality*.

XI THE OCEAN

This eloquent apostrophe to the Ocean is in Byron's (1788—1824) *Childe Harold*, an autobiographical poem, describing his travels in various parts of Europe. A poet full of energy and a rich imagination with a powerful command over words, Byron thrills the youthful reader in spite of his somewhat depressing outlook on life.

- L. 25. *Haply*: perhaps.
 - L. 28. *There let him lay*: an obvious mistake of grammar forced by the needs of rhyme.
 - L. 31. *Leviathans*: here ships, so-called from the leviathan, a fabulous sea-monster mentioned in the Bible.
 - L. 35. *Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar*: the reference is to the Spanish Armada defeated by the British in 1588 and the naval battle of Trafalgar (1805) where the English fleet under Lord Nelson defeated the French.
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XII

THE CLOUD

The purest qualities of poetry are embodied in Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792—1822). Though he died at an early age he has left an imperishable name in English literature. An ethereal imagination, fine sense of colour and an instinctive ear for music are among his poetic qualities. This piece is not only about the cloud, but also of other impersonations of nature, the sunrise, the moon, thunder and lightning, all brightened in poetic description.

- L. 7. *Mother's breast*: the bosom of the earth whose motion round the sun is referred to in the next line.
- L. 28. *The spirit he loves*: the spirit which informs water, beloved of the lightning.
- L. 31. *Sanguine*: of blood-red colour.
- L. 33. *Rack*: masses of cloud.
- L. 45. *That orbed maiden*: Diana, the moon-goddess, also called Artemis.
- L. 71. *The sphere-fire*: the glow of the sun.
- L. 81. *Cenotaph*: an empty tomb, raised as a monument to the dead. The colourless sky is called here the cenotaph of the cloud.

NOTES

XIII
AUTUMN

This ode (an eloquent and musical poem written on a lofty theme, characterised by unity of thought) is mainly an apostrophe to autumn personified. If Autumn has not the beauties of Spring, it has charms of its own.

John Keats (1795—1821) is one of the most pathetic figures in English literature, as his career of bright promise in poetry was cut off at a very early age. ‘Sensuousness’ is a word which more or less sums up the poetical qualities of John Keats.

- L. 17. *Drows'd*: made drowsy, an uncommon transitive use of the word.
- L. 30. *Hilly bourn*: the word ‘bourn’ is correctly a boundary as in the famous passage in Shakespeare:
 The undiscovered country from whose bourn
 No traveller returns,
 but Keats has used the word in the sense of region.
- L. 32. *Garden-croft*: a piece of land enclosed for a garden.
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XIV
THE VALE OF CASHMERE

This famous outburst of appreciation of the valley of Cashmere must be of special interest to students in India. The passage occurs in the *Lalla Rookh* of the Irish poet, Thomas Moore (1779—1852), a book containing a series of Oriental tales, the occasion being the journey of Lalla Rookh,



the daughter of the Moghul Emperor, from Delhi to Cashmere, to be married to the young king of Bucharia. The poetry of Thomas Moore is luscious and musical and deals generally with the world of love and romance.

XV

MORTE D'ARTHUR

This is one of the *Idylls of the King* written by Lord Tennyson (1809—1892) on the great English hero of legend and romance, King Arthur. He established an order of the Knights of the Round Table and made them swear:

To reverence the King, as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King.
 To break the Heathen and uphold the Christ,
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it.
 To honour his own word as if his God's.
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity.
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her.
 And worship her by years of noble deeds.
 Until they won her.

This is the concluding section of his poems on Arthur and describes his death, the title itself meaning, 'The Death of Arthur' which is the name of a famous book on the subject, by Sir Thomas Malory containing most legends about King Arthur. Disappointed in his ideals, having been deceived by his favourite Knight, Sir Lancelot who seduced his wife and by his own nephew, Sir Modred who revolted against him with

the help of some knights of the Round Table, the great hero is seen here leaving this world. According to a tradition, King Arthur is still living and will come back to rule Britain once more!

The following is the original passage in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* on which this poem is based—it is interesting to compare Tennyson's poetry with Malory's version:

'Therefore, said Arthur, take thou Excalibar, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again, and tell me what thou there sawest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again. So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and haft were all of precious stones, and then he said to himself, if I throw this rich sword into the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibar under a tree. And as soon as he might he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water. What sawest thou there? said the king. Sire, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds. That is untruly said of thee, said the king; therefore go thou lightly again, and do my command as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in. Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then he thought it sin and shame to throw away that noble sword; and so eft he hid the sword, and returned again, and told to the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. What sawest thou there? said the king. Sire, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and the waves wan. Ah, traitor, untrue, said King Arthur, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have wend that thou that hast been to me so lief and dear, and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the riches of the sword. But now go again

lightly, for the long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do not now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands, for thou wouldest for my rich sword see me dead. Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might, and there came an arm and a hand above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. Alas, said the king, help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long. Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank hoved a little barge, with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods, and all they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur. Now put me into the barge, said the king: and so he did softly. And there received him three queens with great mourning, and so they set him down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head, and then that queen said, Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught over much cold. And so then they rode from the land; and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies? Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in. For I will into the vale of Avalon, to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul. But ever the queens and the ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and

wailed, and so took the forest and so he went all the night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two holts hoar of a chapel and an hermitage.'

- L. 4. *Lyonness*: also spelt *Lyonnesse*, the fabled land connecting Cornwall with the Scilly Isles, where Arthur waged his last battle, with Sir Modred.
- L. 21. *Camelot*: the capital of King Arthur, identified with many places like Winchester, Carlisle and others.
- L. 23. *Merlin*: the great magician to whose care Arthur was entrusted on the death of his father which was on the very day of his birth.
- L. 27. *Excalibar*: Arthur's famous sword.
- L. 198. *Three Queens*:

"Three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him fair and bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need."

- LI. 232-33. *The light that led . . . myrrh*: the reference is to the star which appeared at the birth of Christ and attracted the Three Wise Men from the East to offer homage to him in Bethlehem. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house—they presented unto him gifts; gold and frankincense and myrrh."

- L. 259. *Avilion*: supposed to be near Glastonbury. Tennyson refers to the subject in his *Palace of Art*:

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon
And watch'd by weeping queens.

Arthur was the son of King Uther.

- Ll. 266—269. *Like some full-breasted swan.....
.....scurthy webs:* it is an old tradition that
the swan sings sweetly just before its death.
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XVI

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

Ratishon (German Regensburg) is an ancient town in Bavaria on the right bank of the Danube. The incident referred to happened in 1809 when Napoleon stormed the town and it was defended by the Austrians. The poem is by Robert Browning (1812—1889), one of the greater poets in the history of English literature. Profundity of thought, intensity of emotion and a vivid dramatic sense are the leading qualities of his poetry, though this small piece is no index of his greatness as a poet.

- L. 11. *Lannes:* a famous and trusted marshal of Napoleon afterwards the Duc de Montebello.
-

XVII

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

According to Matthew Arnold himself, the story of Sohrab and Rustum is told in Sir John Malcolm's History of Persia as follows, though he has borrowed from other sources also:

"The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under

the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage. The second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father. The third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic: he cursed himself, attempted to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents, and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred. The army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. It was commanded by Haman: and Zorrah attended, on the part of Rustum, to see that this engagement was respected by the Persians. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days."

Though called only an 'episode,' this narrative poem is in the nature of an epic, dealing with the fortunes of high-placed individuals and being full of action. The execution of the work is as noble as the conception of the subject. Besides being an elegant and scholarly poet, full of the classical spirit, Matthew Arnold was also an eminent prose writer and critic.

The poem falls into four sections. Ll. 1—103: the scene is set for the action and the chief personages of one side are introduced—there is an air of impending tragedy, Ll. 101—290: there is a cheerful description of the preparations for war; Ll. 291—864: contain a detailed account of the combat. Ll. 865—892: the reader's mind is restored to some measure of tranquillity, it is gradually withdrawn from the tragedy and made to contemplate on the majesty of the course of the Oxus.

- L. 5. *Sohrab*: many marvellous stories are told of the childhood of Sohrab. He is said to have learnt the use of arms when he was only three years old and at ten he could overcome anybody in the country!
- L. 11. *Peran-Wisa*: an old Tartar nobleman, at one time commander-in-chief of Afrasiab's army.
- L. 15. *Pamere*: the great plateau from which the principal mountain ranges of Asia diverge.
- L. 38. *Afrasiab*: king of the Tartars who invaded Persia thrice, the great opponent of Rustum.
- L. 39. *As thy son*: as if I were thy son.
- L. 42. *Ader-baijan*: the home of Sohrab's mother. S.-W. of the Caspian Sea.
- L. 82. *Saistan*: a province on the borders of Persia and Afghanistan.
- L. 101. *Kara-Kul*: in Bokhara, famous for its fine breed of sheep.

- L. 107. *Haman*: one of Afrasiab's generals.
- L. 113. *Casbin*: a town to the south of the Caspian Sea.
- L. 114. *Elburz*: a mountain in the same region.
Aralian estuaries: the mouths of the rivers flowing into the Aral Sea.
- L. 128. *Ferghana*: a province W. E. of Bokhara.
- L. 131. *Kipchack*: a district to the south of the sea of Aral.
- L. 132. *Kalmuck*: a tribe living to the west of the Caspian Sea.
Kuzzaks: one of the Turkish tribes.
- L. 133. *Kirghizzes*: another Turkish tribe.
- L. 138. *Ilyats*: tribes.
Khorassan: one of the provinces of Persia.
- L. 144. *Ferood*: a Persian prince.
- L. 171. *Gudruz*: one of Kai-Kaus' generals who, according to the *Shah-Namah*, dissuades Rustum from committing suicide after Sohrab's death.
Zoarrah: the brother of Rustum.
- L. 172. *Ferabruz*: the son of Kai-Kaus.
- L. 182. *Haply*: perhaps, not 'happily.'
- L. 217. *Iran*: another name for Persia.
- L. 223. *Kai Khosroo*: the grandson of Kai-Kaus who is restored to his grandfather after many adventures.
- L. 270. *Ruksh*: Rustum's famous horse which is said to have killed a lion!
- L. 286. *Bahrein*: a group of islands in the Persian Gulf.
- L. 287. *Plunging*: the subject, 'who' is understood before plunging.

- L. 412. *Hyphasis or Hydaspes*: names in classical geography for the rivers, Beas and Sutlej in the Punjab.
- L. 152. *That Autumn star*: Sirius, in the constellation of the 'great Dog,' foreboding heat and also evil.
- L. 592. *Koords*: a tribe living near the Caspian Sea.
- L. 631. *Hyacinth*: purple flower, supposed to have sprung from the blood of Hyacinthus, a youth loved by Apollo and killed in an accident.
- L. 659. *That seal*: Rustum had left a talisman to be bound on the arm of the coming child, if it was a boy.
- L. 679. *GriFFin*: the fabulous Persian bird, Simurgh with an eagle's head and wings and a lion's body.
- L. 721. *Sands of life*: borrowed from the hour-glass in which the running out of sand marked the progress of time.
- L. 751. *Helmund, Lake Zirrah*: the former flows into the latter which is an inland lake.
- L. 763. *Moorghab and Tejend*: rivers in Turkestan.
- L. 764. *Kohik*: it is difficult to locate this river.
- L. 765. *The northern Sir*: the Jaxartes.
- Ll. 827—834. Rustum actually did not die either by storm on the mountain or at sea, but lived many years after the death of Kai-Khosroo.
- L. 861. *Jemshid*: the fifth king of Persia, according to legend.
- L. 878. *Chorasmian waste*: the desert land south of the Aral Sea.
- L. 880. *Orgunje*: a small town near the mouth of Oxus. The last lines serve to remind us that Sohrab's

death, though it was a sad episode, brought peace between the two contending armies.

XVIII

ATALANTA'S RACE

William Morris (1834—1896) is one of the best writers of verse-tales we have in the English language, and is the author of *The Earthly Paradise* containing twenty-four stories of classical mythology and mediæval legend and romance. Half the stories are told by the inhabitants of an unknown island in the West, containing the descendants of an ancient Greek colony which has existed for many hundreds of years and where the people still speak the Greek language. The remaining half are narrated by people who had set sail to escape the Black Death in Europe. The story of Atalanta belongs to the former group and is well-known in classical mythology. Pleasant and rapid in his narration, with a rich and well-stored mind, William Morris entertains his readers to a very attractive fare. He modestly called himself, "the idle singer of an empty day," but there is also a more serious aspect of his work with which however the young reader need not be troubled. The poet has deliberately made his language somewhat archaic, to impart an air of antiquity to his stories.

L. 63. *Fleet-foot one*: Diana, the patron saint of chastity who employed herself in hunting in the forest and who was 'fleet of foot.'

L. 79. *Diana*: see notes to line 63.

- L. 167. *Centaurs*: fabulous creatures in classical mythology, half man and half horse.
- L. 177. *Saffron gown*: the wedding robe of a Greek bride.
- L. 184. *The Sea-born one*: Venus, the Goddess of Love who rose from the Mediterranean Sea near the island of Cyprus, like Lakshmi in Hindu mythology.
- L. 206. *Dryads*: wood-nymphs.
- L. 208. *Adonis' bane*: the wild boar, so-called because it killed Adonis, the young lover of Venus.
- L. 224. *Mush*: Grape-juice.
- L. 275. *The three-formed goddess*: Diana, who has three manifestations, as Diana on earth, as Artemis, the moon-goddess in Heaven and as Hecate, or Proserpine in the lower world.
- L. 279. *Her the moon-lit river sees*: Diana, who bathes in rivers during moon-lit nights.
- L. 282. *Sea-born framer of delights*: Venus, the Goddess of Love.
- L. 300. *Artemis*: see notes to line 275.
- L. 343. *Heading*: beheading.
- L. 363. *Close-clipped murk*: the refuse which remains after the juice had been tightly squeezed from apples, grapes or other fruit.
- L. 535. *Saturn's Clime*: the Golden Age of the world, according to classical mythology, when King Saturn ruled. King Saturn was a benevolent ruler, unlike the planet, Saturn in Hindu mythology.

XIX

A RAJPUT NURSE

This well-known episode of Rajput history in which a nurse sacrificed her own child to save the life of the Rana's son, can be read at length in Tod's *Rajasthan*, in Chapter X of the section entitled, the *Annals of Mewar*. Another poetic version of the same story can be found in Herbert Sherring's, *Romance of the Twisted Spear and Other Stories*. Bunbeer, the bastard usurper of Udaipur, wanted to kill the Rana's child that his way to the throne may be easier. The following passage is from Tod:

“Bunbeer however, only awaited the approach of night to remove with his own hands the obstacle to his ambition. Oody Singh was about six years of age. ‘He had gone to his sleep after his rice and milk,’ when his nurse was alarmed by screams from the Rawula (seraglio) and the Bari (barbers) coming in to take away the remains of the dinner, informed her of the cause, the assassination of Rana. Aware that one murder was the precursor of another, the faithful nurse put her charge into a fruit basket and, covering it with leaves, she delivered it to the Bari, enjoining him to escape with it from the fort. Scarcely had she time to substitute her own infant in the room of the prince, when Bunbeer entering enquired for him. Her lips refused their office, she pointed to the cradle and beheld the murderous steel buried in the heart of her babe. The little victim to fidelity was burnt amidst the tears of the Rawula, the inconsolable household of their last sovereign who supposed that their grief was given to the last pledge of the illustrious Sanga. The

nurse (dhae) was a Rajpootani of the Kheechee tribe, her name, Panna, or 'the diamond.'* Having consecrated with her tears the ashes of her child, she hastened after that she had preserved."

It is difficult to find any justification for the change of the nurse's name made by Sir Edwin Arnold from Panna into Moti. Sir Edwin Arnold makes the nurse die immediately after saving the Rana's son, but according to history she lived on.

Sir Edwin Arnold (1832—1904), well-known as the author of the *Light of Asia*, a long narrative poem on the life and teachings of Buddha, spent several years in India at one time, as the Principal of the new defunct Deccan College, Poona. Sir Edwin shows considerable knowledge of Oriental religion and philosophy in his works and is also an elegant and accomplished writer of narrative verse. This poem is taken from his *Lotus and Jewel*.

- L. 17. *Forth from the sunlight*: the Rajput dynasty of Mewar claims descent from the Sun.
 - L. 30. *Gadi*: the seat or throne.
 - L. 40. *Tulwar*: sword (Hindusthani).
 - L. 49. *Chota Rana*: the small Rana.
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XX

THE GATES OF DAMASCUS

This poem with an Oriental setting must make a special appeal to Indian readers. Choosing the ancient city of Damascus, so full of mystery and romance, for the theme o'

* Correctly, "emerald."

his poem, James Elroy Flecker (1884-1915) writes on these four imaginary gates. The first speaks of the desert's desolation: the second, of the sea's romance: the third, of the delights of merchandise and the fourth, the pilgrimage to Mecca and the deeper meaning of life.

- L. 7. *Diarbekir*: a town on the Tigris with remains of ancient fortifications.
- Ll. 18—28. These lines describe what may happen to various individuals in the caravan when they traverse the desert on their way to Bagdad. There is now a motor road across the desert which forms part of the overland route to Europe from India.
- L. 32. *Lebanon*: mountain in Syria and North Palestine and also peak of the same name mentioned very often in the Bible.
- Ll. 32—46. Describes the stories of romance and adventure usually told by sailors who have been to foreign countries.
- L. 13. *Solomon*: the wise King mentioned in the Bible who lived in great splendour.
- L. 44. *Magic ring*: the ring with magic properties possessed by King Solomon. Among its wonderful achievements was that it sealed refractory Jins in jars and cast them into the Red Sea!
- L. 52. *Homs, Homa*: towns on the route to Aleppo.
- L. 53. *Filigrane*: an earlier form of the word *filigree*. ornamental metal work.
- L. 60. *Salaam Alekum*: the well-known Islamic greeting—‘Peace be upon you!’
- L. 61. *Mihrab*: the niche for prayer in mosques.

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

- L. 64. *Sinai*, the famous mountain in Asia Minor also known as Horeb, or Mount of Moses—as strong and permanent as the mountain-ridge, which is called ‘booming,’ because it echoes sound.
- I 73. *Cycles*: A cycle of the Universe, corresponding to *Yuga* in Sanskrit.
- I 76. In the words of the Bible, it is “The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”
-

XXI UNCONQUERABLE

The two lines concluding the poem.

I am master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul

have made it very famous. The poem is sometimes given the same title, in Latin, *Invictus*. William Ernest Henley (1840—1893) was a cripple from boyhood and a chronic invalid, but he bore his infirmities with courage. It is therefore not an empty boast he has made in this poem. Compare with this, the famous passage in *Julius Cæsar*:

The fault, Dear Brutus, is not in our stars
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

though Shakespeare has also said elsewhere:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport.

XXII THE SOLDIER

Rupert Brooke (1887—1915) was a poet of great promise whose life was unfortunately cut short during the Great War, almost at the commencement of hostilities. He died in a naval engagement in the Mediterranean, but has left an imperishable name in English poetry. English poetry is full of the element of patriotism and this is one of the finest specimens we have in the language, which is very high praise indeed. Mourning his friend, Arthur Hallam, whose remains were brought to England for burial. Tennyson wrote in similar strain:

'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid.
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.

XXIII A PASSER-BY

This noble apostrophe to a ship on the high seas was written by the last Poet-Laureate. Robert Bridges (1844—1930). A poet with scrupulous ideals who was not anxious to catch the popular imagination, he was always appreciated only by a small circle of readers. Fastidious in his workmanship, scholarly in his temperament and full of lyric emotion, he has, however, taken a permanent place in literature.

SELECTIONS IN POETRY

XXIV
BEYOND THE LAST LAMP

It is difficult to say whether Thomas Hardy (1840—1928) was greater as a poet or as a novelist. It is true that many of his poems have a tragic background, but the delicacy of his lyric charm has never been questioned. Clearness of thought, purity of expression and quiet emotional strength are among the outstanding qualities of his poetry. A solitary lane near Tooting common always reminds him of two lovers whom he had seen pacing up and down several years ago.

XXV
FLANNAN ISLE

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (born 1878) is a very successful writer of verse-tales, most of them with a tragic ending. The sorrows of everyday life find powerful expression in his verse. This is a story of the mysterious disappearance of the three watchers of a light-house on a solitary island. His poetry is full of dramatic vividness. Because of his deep and abiding interest in the lives of the industrial classes, he has been called "the laureate of modern industrialism."

XXVI

THE ROYAL TOMBS OF GOLCONDA

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu (1879) belongs to Hyderabad and it is not surprising she feels inspired to write on the Royal Tombs of Golconda, adjoining the city of her birth. The tombs are those of the Kutb Shahi Kings of the Deccan who were conquered by Aurangzeb in 1767 and are situated just outside the old fortress of Golconda. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu has written *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and the *Broken Wing*. They contain dainty lyrics full of verbal charm, descriptive of varied aspects of Indian life and civilisation.

XXVII

FOR THE FALLEN

This is one of the best tributes paid to those who died in the last war. Laurence Binyon (1867) is an accomplished poet and an authority on matters relating to Oriental art. For several years he was Keeper of Oriental Prints and Drawings in the British Museum.

XXVIII

LEISURE

This is a protest against the hurry and excitement of modern civilisation like Wordsworth's, *The World is Too Much With Us*. What is life worth, asks the poet, if there is no leisure for the quiet and peaceful contemplation of Nature.

W. H. Davies is a Welshman (born 1874) and came into prominence by his *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* published in 1908. His poetry is characterised by a charming simplicity which very few have attained.

XXIX A CONSECRATION

John Masefield (born 1874) is the present Poet-Laureate in England, appointed in succession to Robert Bridges, one of whose poems is also included in these selections. He has very few equals as a writer of stories in verse and has won great popularity by his tales in verse like the *Everlasting Mercy*, the *Widow of the Bye Street*, *Dauber*, etc. He is also an effective writer of English prose. This poem may be looked upon as a statement of his own poetical ideals. His ambition is to write about the low and the down-trodden, rather than about those who are favoured by fortune.

- L. 8. *Cock-horse*: astride, mounted.
- L. 9. *Koppie*: also *Kopie*, *Koppi*, meaning a small hill, borrowed from South Africa during the Boer War, a word of Dutch origin.
- L. 13. *Clout*: patched shoe or garment.
- L. 14. *Chanty man*: singing sailor.
Halliards: rope or ship's tackle, *halyard* and *haulyard* being other forms of the same word.

XXX

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

This poem is by William Butler Yeats, one of the leading English poets of to-day, born in 1865. He is looked upon as the leader of the Irish School of Poetry and his work is full of mysticism. In this poem, he is anxious to escape from the feverish bustle of the modern world to a peaceful and solitary place. It does not matter where Innisfree is!

XXXI

WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR

Rabindranath Tagore is the well-known living Indian poet (born 1861) who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1914. The author of *Gitanjali*, the *Gardener* and the *Crescent-Moon*, his special work is in poetry, but he is also a successful writer of plays, novels and stories. His original lyrics which are in Bengali are all in verse, while their English translations are in prose as in this case. This prayer is not intended for India only but for all countries. It will be a useful exercise to expand the ideas expressed in a somewhat concentrated manner form in this poem.

APPENDIX

HINTS TO TEACHERS

(N.B.—These hints are not meant to be exhaustive, nor are they intended to indicate the range of knowledge to be acquired by intermediate candidates. The numbers refer to the poems).

1. Read one or two other Sonnets of Milton to the class, particularly *On His Being Arrived to His Twenty-Third Year* which shows similar intensity of religious spirit. The beginning of *Samson Agonistes* (Ll. 66—102) has an autobiographical lamentation of blindness similar to the passage quoted from *Paradise Lost*. Explain clearly the metrical structure of the Sonnet.
2. Analyse the contents of the poem for the benefit of students, in various sections, and trace the development of the central thought. Read Matthew Arnold's essay on Gray in his *Essays in Criticism* (Second Series) and also look into the admirable monograph on Gray by Edmund Gosse in the English Men of Letters Series.
3. Black's life of Goldsmith in the English Men of Letters Series will give you all the information necessary for an effective teaching of this poem. Relate the ideas of the poem to the present condition of rural areas in India, to make it real and vivid to your students. They may be encouraged to write an essay on the subject in the composition class. Let them describe their own village school, temple, or mosque, even though they may not belong to Deserted Villages!

4. In Chapter I of Goldwin Smith's life of William Cowper (E. M. L. Series), you will find the biographical material necessary for teaching this poem.

5. Read the passage referring to Bowles in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter I, for an appreciation of his work as poet. You will find four of his Sonnets in the *Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*.

Tell the story of Pandora's Box to your class and explain how Hope alone remained at the bottom of the box to assuage the lot of man. The fable is also found in Kingsley's *Water Babies*.

6. The excellent monograph on Wordsworth in the English Men of Letters Series is all that you have to read by way of criticism. There is a good appreciation of the *Happy Warrior* at the end of Chapter VII.

7. *The Golden Book of Coleridge*, edited by Stopford Brooke. *Everyman's Library*, has an admirable introduction to the poet. Make your students realise the features of Ballad poetry. Read and explain the marginal notes of Coleridge as you go on reading the poem.

8. Ainger's *Lamb* in the English Men of Letters Series gives you the necessary biographical detail. But knowledge of some of the *Essays of Elia* will also be handy for your purpose, for instance, *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*.

9. Referring to Blanco White, Cotter Morison writes in his life of Macaulay in the English Men of Letters Series: "Should we consider the writer of the best sonnet that ever was written a poet, if he never had written anything else?"

10. Comment appreciatively on the ideal embodied in these lines.

11. There are many annotated editions of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which will help you to teach this poem well. Among the best are Hamilton Thompson's edition published by the Cambridge University Press and Tozer's of the Clarendon Press.

12. Matthew Arnold's Essay on Shelley in *Essays in Criticism* (Second Series) is one of the most discriminating pieces of criticism you can study. Shelley's poetry is elusive, but make sure that your students understand the varied and beautiful pictures in the *Cloud*.

13. The poem is really simple in spite of its apparent difficulty. The first stanza is an apostrophe; the second personifies Autumn in various ways and the third mentions that Autumn has its own charms, though it may not be so beautiful as Spring.

14. Look up Moore's *Lalla Rookh* in the original, particularly the last section where this passage occurs. It is impossible to do justice to the teaching of this piece without some descriptive knowledge of the Valley of Cashmere.

15. Read the *Coming of Arthur* and the *Passing of Arthur* which latter includes *Morte D'Arthur* in the *Idylls of the King*. A general knowledge of the Idylls will be most useful in teaching this piece. Make sure that your College library contains a good edition of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, one of the cheapest and best editions being in the Globe Series of Macmillan. There are also many collections of stories from *Morte D'Arthur* specially prepared for young students which must be made available. Refer constantly to Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson*.

16. There is no better and more comprehensive book on Browning than Stopford Brooke's *The Poetry of Browning*. Books like Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Handbook to Browning* or Edward Berdoe's *Browning Cyclopædia* will also be found useful. Make sure that Browning's poetry is not judged entirely on this poem, one reason of its inclusion being that it is not obscure like the majority of his poems.

17. This poem should be particularly useful for the clear and effective treatment of similes, for which Matthew Arnold

is deservedly famous. Illustrate and explain the Epic Simile of which you have many examples in this poem.

It will be an advantage if you can have a map drawn on the blackboard showing the numerous places mentioned in this poem. You will find maps in many annotated editions of this poem, for instance, on page 86 of T. W. Payne's edition (London Series of English Texts, University of London Press, Ltd.).

18. It is best to read at least parts of the *Earthly Paradise* of William Morris in the original. If this cannot be done, at least some prose versions of the stories should be read, for instance, Madalen Edgar's *Stories from the Earthly Paradise* (Harrap), Evan's *Stories from the Earthly Paradise* (Edward Arnold), Emily Underdown's *Stories from William Morris* (Nelson) and Glover's *Tales from the Earthly Paradise* in three books (A. and C. Black). Please provide these books in the college library. Create further interest in the personality of Atalanta by telling your students the story dealt with in Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*.

19. If this story introduces your students to the fascinating world of adventure and romance in Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, it will have served a very useful purpose indeed.

20. The teaching of this and the following poems requires a good knowledge of recent and contemporary poetry. There are several good anthologies of such poems like the First, Second and Third Books of *Modern Poetry* in Macmillan's English Literature for Schools series, the First and Second series of *Poems To-day* prepared by the English Association (Sidewick and Jackson), Gillet's *Poetry of Our Time* (Nelson), *Anthology of Modern Poetry* (Methuen). They should all find a place in the college library. Among books of criticism which may be read on recent and

ntemporary poets are: Charles William's *Poetry At Present* (Clarendon Press), Ward's *Twentieth Century Literature* (Jethuen), Coulson Kernahan's *Six Famous Living Poets. Five more Famous Living Poets* (Thornton Butterworth), Sturgeon's *Studies of Contemporary Poets.* etc.

21. Expatiate at length on the concluding lines of the poem:

I am master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul

and make your students appreciate the philosophy of life implied in them.

22. Read to the class the other well-known sonnet of Rupert Brooke entitled, *The Dead* which really deals with another aspect of the same subject. The Soldier dying for his country on the field of battle

Leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance.
A width, a shining peace under the night.

23. No teacher can realise the greatness of Robert Bridges without a study of his *Testament of Beauty*, though *A Passer-by* is typical of his lyric poetry at its best.

24. There is a very handy volume of selections from the poetry of Thomas Hardy in the Golden Treasury Series (Macmillan).

25. There is an excellent edition of *Sixty-three Poems* by Wilfrid Gibson, edited by Edward Parker (Macmillan).

26. A volume of Sarojini Naidu's Select-Poems has been chosen and edited by H. G. D. Turnbull for schools and colleges with introduction and notes (Oxford University Press).

27. This is one of the numerous poems which can be found in anthologies on those who died in the war.

28. Read and explain to the class. Wordsworth's *The World is Too Much With Us.*

29. Read to the class some poems of Masefield illustrative of this ideal. State that Masefield is the present Poet-Laureate and create some interest in the institution by mentioning at least some of his famous predecessors in office, like Wordsworth, Tennyson and Robert Bridges.

30. Ask your students to sketch in prose a similar retreat of peace and solitude.

31. Read a few lyrics of Rabindranath Tagore to your class from *The Gitanjali*, *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon* which can be bought for a rupee each in Macmillan's cheap Indian edition.

(Insist on the constant use of a good dictionary by your students. for instance. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* and above all. protect them against unauthorised and ill-written notes sold in the bazaar.)

P. SESHADRI.
